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Legislative Assembly of Ontario

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Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Tuesday 15 June 2004

Mardi 15 juin 2004



Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 15 June 2004

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 15 juin 2004

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

ESTIMATES

Hon Gerry Phillips (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I have a message from the Honourable Lieutenant Governor signed by his own hand.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): The Lieutenant Governor transmits estimates of certain sums required for the services of the province for the year ending 31 March 2005 and recommends them to the Legislative Assembly.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HALIBURTON FOREST AND WILDLIFE RESERVE

Ms Laurie Scott (Haliburton-Victoria-Brock): I rise today to share news of an exciting new tourist attraction located in my riding. This past Friday, the only passenger submarine operating in freshwater anywhere in the world was launched. Visitors to the Haliburton Forest and Wildlife Reserve can now take a submarine ride that takes them 70 feet below the surface of pristine MacDonald Lake.

MacDonald Lake is home to the Haliburton gold lake trout and Haliburton Forest and Wildlife Reserve. It offers visitors the unique opportunity to see the abundance of fish and the intact ecosystem of the glacial lake. The lake trout have been isolated at MacDonald Lake and nearby watersheds for around 100,000 years.

Frequent visitors to the area will already know about the other attractions that are available at the wildlife reserve—I'm sure the Chair of Management Board will know this—including a canopy walk, which takes visitors 70 feet above the forest floor through a stand of old-growth pine trees, dog sledding, a wolf exhibit, an observatory and a planetarium. The canopy boardwalk is over half a kilometre long and winds through the treetops between two platforms suspended from the treetops above. There is a spectacular view across the lakes and forests.

Tourism is important to the economy of this province, and very important to the economy of my riding. As we move into the summer tourist season, I want to wish all the tourist operators a successful season and encourage members from all sides of the House to visit and enjoy

the spectacular scenery and attractions like our new submarine.

SAM LAWRENCE

Ms Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): It's my privilege today to rise and pay tribute to the 70-year anniversary of the first CCF member elected to the Ontario provincial Parliament, Sam Lawrence.

As members will know, Sam Lawrence was elected from the jurisdiction of Hamilton. He originally hailed from the country of England. He was a very active member of the trade union movement and in fact joined the Masons back in England in 1897. In 1912 he moved to the city of Hamilton with his family and remained very strongly committed to the causes of working people through his entire public life, which was quite extensive.

In 1922 he was elected initially to the city of Hamilton council and served there as a ward councillor, and then, many years afterwards, as a member of the board of control. In 1934 he was elected to the Ontario Legislature, becoming the first CCF member at Queen's Park, and served as the leader of the CCF, of course, in that capacity.

He was president of the Stone Cutters' Union, spent 60 years as an active member of that union, and not only did he participate in the causes of working people in the city of Hamilton, but he represented the interests of working people in Ontario as a CCF member. So it's my pleasure to recognize the 70th anniversary of his membership here at the provincial Legislature.

ANNIVERSARY OF GUYANESE INDEPENDENCE

Mr Shafiq Qaadri (Etobicoke North): To the people of Ontario, on behalf of my constituents in Etobicoke North and beyond, I rise today in commemoration of the anniversary of Guyana's independence and to let people know that there is a grand independence festival in Toronto this weekend.

It was on May 26, 38 years ago, that Guyana, the "land of the waters," achieved independence from the United Kingdom. Today it is a fellow member of the Commonwealth and has enjoyed good diplomatic relations with Canada since 1964. Though it's located in South America, over half of its population is of South Asian ancestry. This fusion of cultures has led to a distinct society that is renowned for its hospitality, festivals and energy.

This year, from June 18 to June 20, Toronto's Guyanese community will be holding its ninth annual independence day festival. The event holds the distinction of being the largest annual gathering of the Guyanese community outside of Guyana itself. This year, the festival begins with a launch reception on Friday at 7 pm, and events will continue Saturday and Sunday at the L'Amoreaux Community Recreation Centre.

I invite all my fellow members of Parliament and all the people of Ontario to celebrate Guyana's independence, to meet with Guyanese Canadians in their constituencies and to exchange ideas about the future of both of these great members of the Commonwealth.

RAIL OVERPASS

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I rise today to ask the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal to take the safety of the citizens of the town of Ingersoll into consideration and allocate funding through the Canada-Ontario municipal-rural infrastructure fund toward the construction of a much-needed railway overpass.

The county of Oxford has met with the Minister of Finance and has sent a business plan to the Ministry of Transportation and the Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal outlining the risks to public safety and the need for provincial funding. This plan demonstrates the significant public safety risks caused by railroad tracks which run directly through the town and sever traffic movement from one side of the town to the other.

These tracks carry over 40 trains a day and are often used to shunt cars back and forth. As a result, emergency service vehicles are frequently unable to cross the town to provide services to the citizens on the other side of the tracks. The Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal's news release states that the Canada-Ontario municipal-rural infrastructure fund is meant to address local priorities like local roads and bridges, as well as help address other health and safety priorities.

I urge Minister Caplan to include the town of Ingersoll in those health and safety priorities by funding the provincial portion of this overpass so that the emergency service vehicles can serve all citizens of the town at any time of the day. I urge the minister to do this without delay and demonstrate his dedication to the safety of all the citizens of Ontario. Thank you, Mr Speaker, and thank you, Minister Caplan.

1340

REBOUND YOUTH PROGRAM

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): I'm pleased to rise today to speak about an important program in my riding that has been reaching out to help troubled youth for two decades. Sarnia-Lambton Rebound is a volunteer-based, non-profit organization that has been supporting at-risk young people in my community since 1984.

Rebound provides programming for youth who are beginning to experience difficulties with their families,

their schools or the law. For 20 years, Rebound has helped over 10,000 young people to develop skills that promote a positive response to self, to others and to their community.

Rebound's success has been outstanding: 92% of youth who work with Rebound remain out of trouble with the law, and that's an amazing success rate. Rebound is estimated to have saved the Ontario government more than \$13.8 million by diverting youth away from the court system and on to better lives.

I'd like to take this opportunity to commend the large number of volunteers and staff at Rebound for their tremendous contribution to the community for over 20 years. They do us all a service by helping our young people to grow into better citizens and lead better and happier lives.

RITSON ROAD ALLIANCE CHURCH

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): It is with great pleasure that I rise today to congratulate the Ritson Road Alliance Church in my riding of Oshawa on 50 years of prayer, celebration and giving to our community.

The Ritson Road Alliance Church began as a group of individuals meeting in a tent to celebrate their faith, led by then Reverend Bill Newell. When the weather became too cold, they moved indoors to a facility across town to continue their worship. The church finally constructed a permanent residence in 1970 at the corner of, yes, of course, Ritson Road and Oshawa Boulevard, where the congregation still meets today.

The Ritson Road Alliance Church has a long history of community involvement, especially with children, youth and teens. Since the inception of the church in 1954, programs have been organized for the younger members of the community, such as children and teen camps, day camps during the summer, and most recently basketball camp for teens.

Pastor Al Nikkel, staff and the congregation of the Ritson Road Alliance Church are networking with other local churches in the community in the hope that together they can provide bigger and better programs for the youth of Oshawa.

I would ask all members of the Legislative Assembly to join me and take this opportunity to recognize and congratulate the great efforts of the Ritson Road Alliance Church for 50 years of giving to our community.

NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH LONDON

Mr Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe): I rise today to honour one of London's longest-running community-based crime prevention programs. In June, Neighbourhood Watch London will celebrate 21 years of continuous service. Starting in 1983 with a single watch established by a concerned citizen, it has grown to cover one third of London, with over 450 watches serving more than 40,000 households.

Neighbourhood Watch has proven to be extremely successful. Over 76% of break-and-enters in London occur in an area where residents do not participate in that program. Their success comes by sharing crime prevention techniques and by the constant vigilance of more than 10,000 volunteers.

Neighbourhood Watch continues to grow with the support of the city of London through base program budgets and fundraising initiatives such as HomeFinder. HomeFinder is a highly reflective plate that attaches behind existing house address numbers and reflects emergency vehicle lights back to the street, making it easier to find addresses more quickly in an emergency situation.

Working with the London Police Service and other community partners, Neighbourhood Watch is helping to make the neighbourhoods of London safer.

This government is committed to community justice programs, and we recently expanded youth justice committees in Toronto to help neighbourhoods deal more effectively with low-risk young offenders.

Studies have shown that community-based crime prevention initiatives and court alternatives are successful in helping to create strong and safe communities. I applaud Neighbourhood Watch London. I congratulate the program on its 21st anniversary.

COMMUNITY-BASED MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mrs Linda Jeffrey (Brampton Centre): I want to take this opportunity to congratulate the health minister for investing in community mental health services. One in five Ontarians experiences mental illness in their lifetime. As many as four in five Ontarians have a family member, friend or colleague who has experienced a mental illness in their lifetime. I've learned that over 70% of Ontarians with moderate mental illness never receive help.

There have been 19 provincial government reports since 1988 that have recommended increases to the core budgets of community mental health services, yet the last increase to the core budgets of community mental health services was in 1992.

Our government is fixing this serious deficiency. Increased funding to community health services will give Ontarians better access to quality care closer to home. I'm particularly happy with the focus on prevention and intervention. This will provide greater support to families and caregivers, while relieving overload by expanding case management, crisis response and taking action before things spiral out of control.

Bonnie Yagar of the Fair Share task force recently congratulated our government for our recent initiatives on mental health after years of little or no funding in Peel for mental health.

It is critical that greater access be provided for people with moderate and severe mental illness. Yesterday's announcement gives me great hope that this will be accomplished and I applaud the health minister and our government for this directive.

FEDERAL ELECTION

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): Here we go again, déjà vu all over again: recycled Harris-Harper Reform-Conservatives pushing reckless tax cuts and service cuts and private health care. Another part of their platform that particularly caught my eye is their plan to deal with municipalities, or rather, a plan not to deal with cities.

Harris-Harper Reform-Conservatives look at the gas tax and see it as an easy way to buy themselves some votes. In essence, they plan to transfer part of the gas tax to the province and then make up the lost revenue by eliminating the Canada strategic infrastructure program and the municipal-rural infrastructure program. What they propose is to give with one hand and take with the other. This is a high-stakes game. The people of Ontario will see through this hidden agenda.

In contrast, the Liberal platform promotes a new deal for cities. The new deal is about transforming the relationship between levels of government and improving the places Canadians call home. The key word here is "municipalities." It is clear which leader truly understands the values and goals of the citizens of Ontario. Mr Harper refuses to recognize or invest in our cities.

I believe our Premier said it best when he said, "We need to have a respectful and productive partnership with the federal government, working together on behalf of Ontarians, instead of squabbling with each other, at the expense of Ontarians."

I know we can work together on behalf of Ontarians come June 29. I only hope the next federal government has the best intentions of our provinces and our communities in mind.

ANNUAL REPORT, INFORMATION AND PRIVACY COMMISSIONER

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): I beg to inform the House that I have today laid upon the table the 2003 annual report of the Information and Privacy Commissioner.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

ELECTRICITY RESTRUCTURING ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 SUR LA RESTRUCTURATION DU SECTEUR DE L'ÉLECTRICITÉ

Mr Duncan moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 100, An Act to amend the Electricity Act, 1998 and the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 and to make consequential amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 100, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur l'électricité, la Loi de 1998 sur la Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

All those against the motion, say "nay."

I think the ayes have it.

Call in the members. There will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1350 to 1355.

The Speaker: All those in favour of the motion, please rise and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted
 Arthurs, Wayne
 Baird, John R.
 Bentley, Christopher
 Berardinetti, Lorenzo
 Broten, Laurel C.
 Brownell, Jim
 Bryant, Michael
 Cansfield, Donna H.
 Caplan, David
 Colle, Mike
 Cordiano, Joseph
 Craitor, Kim
 Crozier, Bruce
 Dhillon, Vic
 Di Cocco, Caroline
 Dombrowsky, Leona
 Duguid, Brad
 Duncan, Dwight
 Dunlop, Garfield
 Fonseca, Peter
 Gerretsen, John
 Gravelle, Michael

Hardeman, Ernie
 Hoy, Pat
 Hudak, Tim
 Jackson, Cameron
 Jeffrey, Linda
 Klees, Frank
 Kular, Kuldip
 Kwinter, Monte
 Lalonde, Jean-Marc
 Marsales, Judy
 Matthews, Deborah
 Mauro, Bill
 McNeely, Phil
 Miller, Norm
 Milloy, John
 Mitchell, Carol
 Murdoch, Bill
 O'Toole, John
 Ouellette, Jerry J.
 Patten, Richard
 Peters, Steve
 Peterson, Tim
 Phillips, Gerry

Pupatello, Sandra
 Qaadri, Shafiq
 Racco, Mario G.
 Ramal, Khalil
 Ramsay, David
 Runciman, Robert W.
 Ruprecht, Tony
 Sandals, Liz
 Scott, Laurie
 Sergio, Mario
 Smith, Monique
 Smitherman, George
 Sorbara, Greg
 Van Bommel, Maria
 Watson, Jim
 Wilkinson, John
 Wilson, Jim
 Witmer, Elizabeth
 Wong, Tony C.
 Wynne, Kathleen O.
 Yakubuski, John
 Zimmer, David

The Speaker: All those opposed to the motion, please rise and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Bisson, Gilles
 Churley, Marilyn
 Hampton, Howard

Horwath, Andrea
 Kormos, Peter

Marchese, Rosario
 Prue, Michael

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 68; the nays are seven.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Mr Duncan?

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I will have a ministerial statement.

HEALTH INSURANCE AMENDMENT ACT (SUPPLEMENTAL NEWBORN SCREENING), 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'ASSURANCE-SANTÉ (DÉPISTAGE COMPLÉMENTAIRE DES NOUVEAU-NÉS)

Mr Baird moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 101, An Act to amend the Health Insurance Act /
 Projet de loi 101, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'assurance-santé.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): This bill would include, under the public insurance program, coverage for a condition that many infants and children

unknowingly suffer from, called medium chain dehydrogenase deficiency, which may be the cause of one out of 100 infant deaths thought to be related to SIDS. It is a piece of legislation that is being strongly pushed for by many families around the province, including a family that has been touched by this in my constituency.

I should give credit: It was originally presented as a private member's bill by the now Minister of Energy, and I hope that it can get all-party support.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Do we have unanimous consent to put forward the motion? Agreed.

Hon Mr Duncan: I move that pursuant to standing order 96(g), notice be waived for ballot item 28.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I move that pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 pm to 9:30 pm on Tuesday, June 15, 2004, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Mr Duncan has moved government notice of motion number 132. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

All those against, say "nay."

I think the ayes have it.

Call in the members. There will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1402 to 1407.

The Speaker: All those in favour, please rise and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne
 Bentley, Christopher
 Berardinetti, Lorenzo
 Bradley, James J.
 Broten, Laurel C.
 Brownell, Jim
 Bryant, Michael
 Cansfield, Donna H.
 Caplan, David
 Chambers, Mary Anne V.
 Colle, Mike
 Cordiano, Joseph
 Craitor, Kim
 Crozier, Bruce
 Dhillon, Vic
 Dombrowsky, Leona
 Duguid, Brad
 Duncan, Dwight
 Fonseca, Peter

Gerretsen, John
 Gravelle, Michael
 Hoy, Pat
 Jeffrey, Linda
 Kular, Kuldip
 Kwinter, Monte
 Lalonde, Jean-Marc
 Marsales, Judy
 Matthews, Deborah
 Milloy, John
 McNeely, Phil
 Meilleur, Madeleine
 Mitchell, Carol
 Patten, Richard
 Peters, Steve
 Peterson, Tim
 Phillips, Gerry
 Pupatello, Sandra

Qaadri, Shafiq
 Racco, Mario G.
 Ramal, Khalil
 Ramsay, David
 Rinaldi, Lou
 Ruprecht, Tony
 Sandals, Liz
 Sergio, Mario
 Smith, Monique
 Smitherman, George
 Sorbara, Greg
 Takhar, Harinder S.
 Van Bommel, Maria
 Watson, Jim
 Wilkinson, John
 Wong, Tony C.
 Wynne, Kathleen O.
 Zimmer, David

The Speaker: All those against, please rise and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arnott, Ted
Baird, John R.
Barrett, Toby
Bisson, Gilles
Churley, Marilyn
Dunlop, Garfield
Hampton, Howard
Hardeman, Ernie
Horwath, Andrea

Hudak, Tim
Jackson, Cameron
Klees, Frank
Kormos, Peter
Marchese, Rosario
Miller, Norm
Murdoch, Bill
O'Toole, John
Ouellette, Jerry J.

Prue, Michael
Runciman, Robert W.
Scott, Laurie
Sterling, Norman W.
Wilson, Jim
Witmer, Elizabeth
Yakubuski, John

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 56; the nays are 25.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

ELECTRICITY RESTRUCTURING

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): For the past 10 years, the people of this province have witnessed our electricity system decline from being the envy of the world to a point where if we don't act quickly and prudently, we will find ourselves in very serious trouble. With this legislation, we begin to unravel the mess that was left by the previous government, as witnessed in Bill 35. Of Ontario's present generation capacity of 30,000 megawatts, almost 18,000 megawatts are due for retirement or refurbishment by 2020. During that period, peak demand is expected to grow by 400 megawatts per year. We find ourselves in this situation because previous governments failed to act prudently, failed to act responsibly and sometimes just failed to act.

From its first days in office, the McGuinty government has made energy issues a top priority and has moved boldly to bring positive change where it was desperately needed, but we have much to do to secure our energy future. This we know for certain: All else remaining constant, if Ontario's electricity system were left to continue on the course it has followed, it would cease to serve us, cease to power our economy and cease to be the great enabler it has been for more than a century.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order. Member for Nepean-Carleton, I'd like you to be quiet so I can hear the minister.

Hon Mr Duncan: Therefore, it gives me great pride to stand in the House today to introduce the proposed Electricity Restructuring Act for consideration by this assembly. Through this legislation, we are charting new ground in the history of Ontario's electricity sector. We are putting Ontario back on a solid footing by taking a balanced approach that addresses the critical need for new supply, increased conservation, consumers' desire

for price stability, the importance of public leadership and the need for private investment.

Our plan includes a strong public leadership role, clear accountabilities and a coordinated planning approach to address the growing gap between electricity supply and demand, in order to keep the lights on now and far into the future. Beyond all else, our proposed legislation will create stability in a sector that has been rocked far too often. It would reorganize the institutional structure in a way that will best suit the people of Ontario over the long term.

Under our proposed legislation, the Ontario government would continue to set targets for conservation and electricity from renewable sources and set guidelines for diversity of supply. However, responsibility for ensuring long-term supply adequacy, a mandate that no existing institution in Ontario's electricity sector now carries, would belong to a new institution, the Ontario Power Authority. It will ensure that never again will we find ourselves in the predicament we're in today.

The power authority would assess adequacy and reliability of electricity resources and forecast future demand. It would also prepare an integrated system plan for generation, transmission and conservation, to be reviewed by the Ontario Energy Board. In addition to its planning functions, the power authority would have the power to procure new supply and demand management initiatives, either by competition or by contract. When necessary, it would use a competitive and transparent procurement process which would foster innovative and creative approaches to meeting our supply needs.

It's crucial that private investors be allowed to enter Ontario and support the construction of the thousands of megawatts of electricity that we need to build over the next 15 years. We must send a clear and unambiguous message that Ontario's electricity sector is a great place in which to invest.

Having a fully functioning electricity sector is not only about generating raw power. To that end, the power authority would establish a conservation bureau, headed by a chief energy conservation officer, to provide leadership in planning and coordination of electricity conservation and demand management measures that will help consumers save energy and money. This would be the first time for this type of initiative in Ontario. The conservation bureau would help us build a true conservation culture, which, as the Premier has clearly stated, must be a cornerstone of Ontario's long-term energy future.

Under the proposed legislation, the wholesale electricity market would continue to operate but there would be several changes in the oversight mechanisms. The Independent Electricity Market Operator, or IMO, would be renamed the Independent Electricity System Operator, or IESO. It would continue to operate the wholesale market and be responsible for the operation and reliability of the power system. Responsibility for the market surveillance panel would be transferred from the IMO to the Ontario Energy Board. The Ontario Energy Board already has oversight powers to guard against abuse of

market power. The transfer of the market surveillance panel to the board is consistent with the board's consumer protection responsibilities and will consolidate and strengthen this mandate.

Under the proposed legislation, the Ontario Energy Board would continue to have a strong role in protecting consumers through licensing and rate regulation, and would ensure economic efficiency, cost-effectiveness and financial viability of the elements of Ontario's electricity system.

With regard to electricity rates, the board would approve an annual rate plan for low-volume and other small consumers, who would pay a blended price based on regulated, contract and forecasted competitive prices. This would ensure that prices to consumers are fair, stable and predictable and that those who use power will pay its true price.

Under the proposed legislation, consumers who do not wish to participate in the regulated rate plan would have other options, such as purchasing their electricity from energy retailers.

Medium and large businesses would continue to have the flexibility to pay the market price for electricity, or could use energy retailers or financial hedging instruments to manage energy costs.

There is no doubt that this legislation is very complex. In addition, there are many technical regulations that will need careful and thorough attention because they will have far-reaching implications for our citizens and our economy.

Accordingly, this bill will be subject to extensive consultation and input over the summer in order to ensure we get it right, and to ensure that changes are made in the best interests of Ontarians.

We know we will need the ongoing benefit of the ideas, expertise and dedication of those in the electricity sector to meet the challenges that face us. We also invite all citizens to bring us their ideas and concerns at those hearings.

If we work together, we can build an Ontario that has an electricity supply that is the envy of our competitors and a magnet for investors. If we work together, we can make up for over a decade lost in Ontario's electricity sector and ensure Ontario's prosperity for decades to come.

The proposed legislation is a start. By ensuring a reliable, sustainable and diverse supply of power at stable, competitive prices, and creating a conservation culture, we are delivering the real, positive change that Ontarians need and deserve.

The Speaker: Responses?

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I want to first say that I attended the minister's announcement just a short time ago in the press gallery, and it really is important that I stand here today and recognize former ministers John Baird and Jim Wilson.

There's absolutely nothing new in this bill. In fact, it's a reannouncement of what I heard on April 15 at the Empire Club. Really, the only things you've added here

are two new layers of bureaucracy, and how you're going to pay for that on top of that is going to be in the bill. At the end of the day, this is about raising the cost of electricity.

The new power authority you've announced replaces the IMO, which has been doing the planning and implementation. No one here on this side would disagree with the conservation authority you're announcing. The only issue is, you've cancelled the tax credits in your last budget that we had already implemented on energy-efficient appliances.

Minister, you've got to know that you're running out of time. The clock is ticking. While you're eliminating 25% of the generating capacity, what is the cost to the taxpayers of Ontario? Ultimately, all of this is going to show up in your bill at your house.

The consumers of Ontario should be put on notice today by you and this government that you have no intention of keeping any promises. This is yet another broken promise, because you are raising electricity prices.

Look at the objectives of our government. No one would disagree with sustainability, increased conservation and engaging the private sector; they're all laudable. In fact, we support those initiatives. But there's a gaping hole in the generation part of the equation. You know that. In three years, this province could be plunged into darkness because of your inaction. You've created more bureaucracy and not one new kilowatt of power.

Minister, you should know that your false commitment to shut down the five coal plants, which are laudable objectives, was hasty and reckless. You simply can't remove 7,500 megawatts of generating capacity out of the system with no plan. How long is it going to take you to replace that lost generation capacity? The people of Ontario should be concerned, because at the end of the day, you, the consumer of Ontario—that's you and I—are going to pay the price.

1420

The minister isn't being truthful. In fact, I wonder if his own caucus is aware of the great risk. There has been much study done on this. Our previous minister, John Baird, set up the generation-conservation-supply task force, an excellent report. There is the Manley report, the Epp report; you can go back to the Macdonald report. We've studied.

Over the summer, I'm going to be watching and I'm going to be encouraging the consumers of Ontario—the small businesses, the dairy farmers who know their price for electricity is going to double. That's the warning shot that's been made here today.

Minister, you really have no plan except to create more bureaucracy and increase the price. Of course you can create more supply, but the issue remains, at what price? You think you can provide natural gas as a short-term solution, but with all the information I've heard on the supply of natural gas or liquefied natural gas, the question remains for all the experts, at what price?

Be straight with the people of Ontario and tell them your bill today really isn't the restructuring of electricity,

it's the repricing of electricity. You have to be straight with the people.

I can recall the debate on electricity. In the last several years, we've had several attempts—when we were in government you encouraged and in fact voted for the freezing of the rates. You know that the rate is the issue here.

All you've done is confuse the civil servants. The IMO is confused, the Ontario Energy Board is confused, and the new power authority is not sure what its mandate is. You didn't answer the questions at the press conference today, and I expect over the next few weeks there will be more questions than answers. But I can assure the people of Ontario there is one certainty: You can rest assured there is going to be less supply and higher prices, thanks to the inaction of the Liberal government and the broken promises.

Be truthful with the people of Ontario. In fact, the reason I voted for it is I do support conservation and I support stability in supply and confidence in the customers. The Liberals have supplied none of the above. So over the next month or two, during the summer, I look forward to watching closely, and not just on behalf of the constituents in Durham.

I was also surprised today, Minister, at how you openly criticized Ontario Hydro. You should be ashamed of what you announced today. It was nothing more than two more levels of bureaucracy.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): Now we know why all the accountants and the lawyers and the lobbyists on Bay Street have been rubbing their hands and are almost absolutely giddy. The reason is because what they're going to get from the Liberals is the Mike Harris-Jim Wilson hydro privatization scheme. You should take a bow because the grand imitators have just lifted your hydro scheme.

Oh, yes, there is some Liberal doublespeak around the edges to hide some of it, but at the end of the day this is about private power. This is about private hydro-electricity. Private companies will want at least a 15% profit. Up goes the hydro bill. And they will want the Eleanor Clitheroe-style executive salaries: \$2 million a year, \$1 million in bonuses, a \$1-million-a-year pension, a \$6-million severance payment, the expense accounts, the limousine and—how can I forget?—maybe even the yacht. Guess what, consumers of Ontario? That's going to be on your hydro bill.

The private companies, if they are going to build a \$1-billion generating station, will have to borrow the money. But when they go to borrow the money, they'll pay at least 2%, perhaps 3% more in interest rates; \$1 billion paid back over 20 years at a 2% higher interest rate. That's about \$200 million. Guess what, consumers? That's going to go on your hydro bill.

Then there's the doublespeak. While this is a private market, while this will be private purchases of electricity and therefore more expensive, to try to hide it, the Liberals are going to create more bureaucracy. So now, not only will you have the Ontario Energy Board, but you

will have something called the Independent Electricity System Operator and the Ontario Power Authority, and these folks will all want to be on the gravy train as well. They will want the big salaries and the big executive offices. And guess what, consumers? You will pay for that on your hydro bill. What the minister didn't say to consumers is, "Get ready for your hydro bill to go up again"—yes—and to go up significantly and increase on a year-over-year basis.

I can tell the minister that private sector companies will only come here if they get the price they want, as you know and I know. For example, natural gas is saying, "Hey, we want eight cents a kilowatt hour." That is significantly higher than what people are paying right now, and that's why their hydro bill will go up.

But there are some other things here that people need to understand. What we've had in Ontario, actually, is control over our electricity supply. What the Liberals will now do is turn electricity into a completely tradable commodity, just like natural gas or oil. I've heard people say, "Gee, the oil comes from Canada and the natural gas comes from Canada. Why do we have to pay the same high rate for natural gas that they're paying in Chicago?" The reason is that under the North American free trade agreement, oil and natural gas are tradable commodities. We pay what they're willing to pay in Chicago.

The Liberals are now going to do the same to electricity. So electricity that's produced in Ontario will not necessarily belong to Ontarians any more. If somebody in Chicago is prepared to pay much more for the electricity, that's where it goes, and we either have to pay the same price or we don't get it. People need to understand that. Liberals are now turning our electricity system into a completely tradable commodity, and that will mean, down the road, that if we want to keep our own electricity, we have to be prepared to outbid New York or Chicago or Detroit. The price of that will be very, very expensive, and it too will show up in the hydro bill.

You know, I was expecting an actual plan today, but we still don't have a plan. What the government is saying is, "We're going to create these new bureaucratic bodies and perhaps they will create a plan." The timeline is growing shorter, yet instead of having a plan, we get more gobbledygook and more bureaucratic creations from this government. That means that while these people wait, coal burns, and it means that while they wait, the electricity shortage problem grows more serious.

VISITORS

Hon Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I am very pleased to acknowledge in the House the presence of a very distinguished individual from India, Mr Sukhraj Singh Bajwa. He was the former session judge and Registrar General of the Rajasthan high court and was appointed as advocate of the Supreme Court.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): That is not a point of order.

We have in the east gallery a former member, Murray Elston, the member for Huron-Bruce in the 32nd, 33rd, 34th and 35th Parliaments.

ORAL QUESTIONS

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr Ernie Eves (Leader of the Opposition): I have a question for the Premier, and I'm pleased to see that he brought his copy of the budget with him today.

Yesterday in question period, the leader of the New Democratic Party asked the Premier very directly a question with respect to sewer and water pipes and the health care premium, as it was then called—now called a health care tax for reasons of convenience. The Premier certainly left the impression in his answer to that question that there was nothing wrong with spending the health care premium on sewer and water pipes. Yet today, on his way into caucus, he said something totally different in a scrum, and on June 2 this year the Premier said, "I'm Dalton McGuinty, and I want you to know that every penny of Ontario's new health care premium will go to health care."

Yet on page 44 of his budget it says, "To ensure that there will be funding, both for health care and for other health enhancing priorities, the government will introduce proposed legislation to create the Ontario health premium to support a \$2.4-billion increase in funding for the programs that contribute to healthier Ontarians this year."

That statement in the budget certainly leads one to believe that—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Thank you, Premier?

1430

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I'm delighted to have this opportunity to demonstrate that the leader of the official opposition and the leader of the third party are completely, absolutely and utterly wrong with respect to their interpretation of what we're doing here.

On page 43 of the budget, it indicates that we're making an additional \$2.2 billion, roughly speaking, by way of new investment in the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. The premium this year is only going to generate \$1.6 billion. Every penny that we generate by the new premium will be invested through the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care in better quality health care for the people of Ontario.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

Mr John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): My question is for the Premier. First you brought in your health tax—broken promise—that has inflicted such punishment on working families and seniors in Ontario. Now they find out that that money is going into infrastructure projects and not just health care. The people of

Ontario and the people of my riding of Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke don't equate infrastructure investment with health care. They equate health care with a visit to their family doctor or a medical procedure of some kind or another.

Premier, your finance minister stated in the budget that, in short, every cent of this premium would be invested in health. You reiterated that commitment in your radio ads. We now see that this is not the case. You performed a sleight of hand with the facts.

My question is this: How do you expect to restore faith in government—in particular, your government—when you treat the truth as if it were playdough to mould and shape any way you see fit for your own political purposes?

Hon Mr McGuinty: The honourable member has a problem accepting the facts and reality. I'll repeat it. We're making an additional \$2.2 billion in investments through the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care this fiscal year. The health care premium will generate \$1.6 billion. Every single penny of that \$1.6 billion of revenue generated by the health care premium will be invested in better health care through the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care for the people of Ontario.

Mr Yakabuski: Mr Premier, your answer to the questions yesterday was quite different. Your answer to the questions admitted that money from that health care tax was going into infrastructure programs. In light of this fact, would you at least do the right thing for the people of Ontario and order that those misleading ads be withdrawn immediately?

Hon Mr McGuinty: Again, the member doesn't want to allow the facts to get in the way of his particular story. But I will repeat it for the sake of clarity and in order to drive it home once again: We're going to invest an additional \$2.2 billion in health care through the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care this year. The premium will generate \$1.6 billion. Every penny of that \$1.6 billion will be invested in better quality health care for the people of Ontario through the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

HEALTH CARE SERVICES

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): My question is to the Premier. In Mike Harris and Ernie Eves's Ontario, debt went down, taxes went down, and health care spending went up by \$11 billion.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order.

Mr Baird: Elderly, frail seniors could visit a physiotherapist in Ontario and present their health card for health care services. Now, under a Dalton McGuinty government, your health card is no good; you need your Amex card to get health care.

I want to ask the Premier directly: What should a frail, elderly senior do who has neither the money nor the Amex card to get physiotherapy services? What should they do?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I can understand why the honourable member would not like to cast his mind back to what happened, but this former government added some \$31 billion to the people's debt. He asked me what we're doing on behalf of seniors. I'd be delighted to tell him that.

One thing in particular is we're creating the opportunity for 100,000 more Ontario seniors to receive home care in their homes, so that they won't have to go into a nursing home. We think that's a good investment on behalf of seniors in Ontario.

Mr Baird: The health care system that you demonized in opposition is now very close to being the law of the land in Ontario. Not since Oliver North diverted funds from arms sales to the Contras have we seen such an outrageous diversion of funds from health care: in the form of chiropractic, in the form of physiotherapy, in the form of optometry. You're diverting funds from health care for sewer pipes. It's outrageous and it's wrong.

I guess by your logic you could put health care money into roads because ambulances use roads. Where do you draw the line on this outrageous diversion of funds? Will you now stand in your place and admit that it's a sham and that no one in the province believes you?

Hon Mr McGuinty: I'll give him marks for creativity. He indulges in some wonderful fiction, but I think the people of Ontario are entitled to the truth. I spoke to this matter a moment ago. I said specifically that when it comes to investment—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Would the member from Erie-Lincoln and the member from Oak Ridges come to order. Premier.

Hon Mr McGuinty: One of the additional benefits that we're providing to seniors through this, our first budget, is a significant investment, close to half a billion dollars, in nursing homes. By way of that investment, we'll be hiring 2,000 additional staff, including 600 nurses. We'll ensure that a registered nurse is on duty on a 24/7 basis in our nursing homes.

We are guaranteeing that our parents and grandparents who find themselves in nursing homes will be getting at least two baths every single week. We're increasing the comfort allowance for people who find themselves in our nursing homes by a 3% increase. Those are the kinds of investments that we are making through this budget in the interest of Ontario seniors.

Mr Baird: I say to the Premier opposite, boy, it takes gall for you to talk about honesty and the truth. Right around the province of Ontario, I'll put my credibility against yours any day of the week.

We've discovered this diversion of funds from health care to sewer pipes. You now stand in your place and you say that every penny from your new health tax will go to health care. That's not what you said yesterday. I suppose you'll now pay for the sewer pipes out of the federal health transfer. By your logic, physiotherapy, chiropractic and optometry are less important than sewer

pipes. Premier, will you now join the official opposition? Will you now join the New Democratic Party? Will you now join a growing number of your own backbenchers—
1440

The Speaker: Question?

Mr Baird: —and every single Liberal MP from the province of Ontario who is calling upon you to back down from these irresponsible and reckless health cuts and restore these—

The Speaker: Order. Thank you.

Hon Mr McGuinty: Suddenly we have a newly converted member here with respect to championing health care. Let me tell you about the position that he held as a proponent of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation and their pre-budget submission, just so we know what it is that the members opposite would have had us do with respect to preparing our first budget. The Canadian Taxpayers Federation said that we should cut health care funding by almost \$1 billion; we should cut education spending by \$431 million; we should cut the Ministry of the Environment by 25%; we should cut municipalities by 25%—

Interjections.

The Speaker: I will be starting to name members, especially members in the front row of the government who have been shouting across and also the member for Nepean-Carleton. We have to proceed during question period in an orderly manner.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): Premier, I asked you yesterday why, under your budget, sewer pipes were now being counted as a health care service. At the time, you said, "The member opposite may not believe that safe and clean drinking water is a prerequisite to good health in Ontario, but I want to commit to him and to his constituents that we will not apologize for doing" this. In other words, you defended your actions. Then this morning, when confronted by the press, you changed your story.

Premier, instead of changing your story from day to day, why don't you just admit that you made a mistake with your budget? You made a mistake in terms of cutting optometry and chiropractors and physiotherapists, and you made a mistake in terms of trying to include sewer pipes as a health care service. You made a mistake. Withdraw it and start over with something that is fair and actually does the job for health care.

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): Again, the \$1.6-billion health care premium will be invested entirely in the new \$2.2-billion by way of expenditures in the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. The balance, of course, will be coming. We put \$1.6 billion into the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. Our total investment is \$2.2 billion. We are short \$600 million; we get that from the federal government. They are also giving us an additional \$200 million and we are investing that in a way which we

think is appropriate and entirely proper on behalf of the people of Ontario. For example, we are spending \$25 million on children's mental health services. We think that's related to health. We are spending \$42 million from the federal money on the Ontario drug benefit plan. We think that is connected to health. We are investing some \$50 million in total in the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities to train more doctors and more nurses. We think that is connected with health. Those are the things that we are doing on behalf of the people of Ontario through the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care with our premiums and through the other money that we're receiving through the federal government.

Mr Hampton: You've still got a big problem, in that you are trying to count things like installing sewer pipes and water pipes and ads by the Ministry of Tourism as health care services. Because when you go to page 70 of the budget, which lists your revenue, what is very clear is that you are getting \$726 million in health transfers from the federal government. Then you tack on the \$1.635 billion you are taking from modest- and middle-income families through the health tax, and it works out to \$2.361 billion, which you don't have, \$2.361 billion of actual health care spending, so you bring in \$200 million of sewer and water pipe, and you try to call that health care spending, health care services. How many times do we have to show it to you? Will you admit that you were wrong to cut chiropractic care, wrong to cut optometrist care, wrong to cut physiotherapy care and then include sewer pipes as part of health care?

Hon Mr McGuinty: It's always a pleasure witnessing the vigour with which the member puts the question. Again, \$1.6 billion generated by way of the new health care premium will be invested through the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

But I want to quote something that I know the honourable member will be interested in hearing, and that's a section from Public Power: Practical Solutions for Ontario, put out by Howard Hampton and the NDP. Practical solution number 12: "Get back to the job of helping people maintain their health in the first place, not just treating the sick." Our plan includes protecting the quality of drinking water at source.

Mr Hampton: What the Premier doesn't understand is there's wide agreement that protecting water is important, but no one ever before has tried to say that this is a health care service. No one is trying to say that this should come out of the health premium.

Here's your choice: Either you're taking \$200 million that the federal government gave you for health care services and spending it on sewer and water pipe, or you're taking \$200 million out of the new health tax and spending it on sewer and water pipe. Either way, it's not a health care service now and not a health care service then. When are you going to be clear with people?

It's wrong to cut the services of chiropractors, physiotherapists and optometrists, and then try to spruce up your budget by including almost \$200 million of sewer and water pipe and trying to call it a health care service.

Hon Mr McGuinty: The member finds himself hoist with his own petard. He's been found out. During the course of the election, he maintained that a plan that included protecting the quality of drinking water at its source was integral to delivering good-quality health care.

And if he now doesn't remember his own platform, then I'll quote from Mr Justice Dennis O'Connor. Subsequent to the travesty that unfolded in the community of Walkerton where seven died and 2,000 were made ill, he prepared a report that said the following: "Protecting source waters by introducing sewage treatment is one of the most important public health measures ever devised."

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order. Stop the clock.

I'm going to ask the members again that they conduct themselves in a manner so we can have good decorum in the House. The fact is, the next time I'm going to start naming people, because we don't seem to be proceeding in a manner that the House should be conducted.

I'm going to ask now to start the clock. New question from the third party.

ELECTRICITY RESTRUCTURING

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): To the Premier: Next week the Premier will be telling us that when he fixes some potholes it's a health care expense because the ambulance happens to go down the road.

I want to ask you now about your fascination with Mike Harris's hydro privatization. You spent the election campaign telling people that you believed in public power, that the market was dead, and what do we find out today? We find out today why all the lawyers, fee-takers and commission-takers on Bay Street are so happy: because what you've introduced or reintroduced today is a full-scale program of privatized hydroelectricity. Can you tell me, Premier, when did public power and "The market is dead" during the election campaign become full-scale privatization for Ontario Liberals?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): The Minister of Energy.
1450

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): The member seems intent on hoisting himself on his petard yet again with this question.

This is not about full-scale privatization. This is about undoing Bill 35, which left the people of this province and electricity consumers to the vagaries—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): The member from Nepean-Carleton, I'm going to warn you. The next time I'll be naming you.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Duncan: It was a full-scale—

The Speaker: I would also warn the member from Simcoe-Grey.

Hon Mr Duncan: The members opposite don't want to face reality: no new supply; inadequate creation; inadequate going forward for the people of Ontario. This government is moving in a prudent way to provide regulated power, to get in new supply, to address the crisis that was left for 14 years by that party and by that party. We're moving prudently and decisively to ensure that Ontarians have a secure and affordable supply of electricity going forward.

Mr Hampton: Minister, let me take you back to the summer of 2002. You must remember that you voted for hydro privatization then. In the summer of 2002 the spot market opens and people's hydro bills go through the roof. The only change you've made is that the Ontario Power Authority is going to be out there buying in the privatized market; otherwise it's a completely privatized market. That much is clear. When the spot market takes off again, people's hydro bills, small business hydro bills and industrial hydro bills will skyrocket once again.

Tell us, when did Liberal policy for hydroelectricity become the Mike Harris Conservative policy for hydroelectricity, which forced people's hydro bills through the roof?

Hon Mr Duncan: The fact is, it never did. This is undoing the Harris-Eves policy. The member forgot to mention conservation. No wonder, because his party cancelled all conservation measures when it was in power. This plan will provide price stability. Again that's something he ignored, because when his party was in power, electricity prices went up 40% in three years.

Just last fall, the member said this government's initiatives would lead to a 20% to 30% increase in price. Do you know what has happened since our last bill? The price has come down. You were wrong about that. That member, his party, his book, were wrong.

Our party is moving to protect consumers with a blended, regulated price that protects consumers large and small, will provide security to the sector and will encourage new generation in Ontario, something that never happened under his government or the previous government. This policy will work.

Mr Hampton: I'm sure that as people open their hydro bill and see that it's higher than ever, they'll be happy to know that the Minister of Energy for the Liberal government is telling them that the price is actually coming down. People can read their hydro bill, and the hydro bill is going up. Minister, no matter how much bombast you bring to the House.

Here is the reality. Electricity is an essential service. It's something people need every day, and we all need it. What we saw from the spot market was that it turns this essential service into a casino game, and you're adopting that casino game. Yes, you may put some bureaucracy around the edges, but this is hydro privatization.

You were the people who promised you were going to keep the hydro freeze. Now we see you adopting, lock, stock and barrel, the Conservative privatization strategy. Can you tell us why you have broken yet another promise? Why are people going to continue to see their hydro bill go up, go up and go up?

Hon Mr Duncan: Their hydro bills went up 40% under the NDP. That's one thing we know for certain.

Talk about consistency. We found an advertisement for a book called *Public Power: The Fight for Publicly Owned Electricity*—\$21.95 at the time; I found it in the dollar bin last week. In any event, what does the advertisement say?

"Hampton concludes this illuminating history with his own vision of a 21st century public power system that gradually reduces our dependence on coal and nuclear power...." What does it go on to say? "... and embraces private power initiatives that contribute to the public good." That member's all over the board.

What did he say in his book? "There will be important roles for the private sector to play in the future of our electricity sector." "I am not ideologically opposed to private power any more than I'm opposed to private restaurants...." "Not sending consumers clear price signals discourages conservation." You raised prices 40%; you cancelled conservation. You have a shameful record. We're going to fix your mess, and their mess.

MINISTER'S COMMENTS

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): My question today is for Premier McGuinty. The member you appointed as the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services yesterday unfortunately told the media that the life of a Scarborough man fatally shot by police would probably have been spared if the police had instead used a Taser gun. Minister Kwinter said, "It's unfortunate that the particular officers that were there were not equipped with Tasers, (because) that would have without question resulted in a different outcome."

With this comment, your honourable minister has jeopardized a criminal investigation. He has jeopardized the current special investigations unit investigation. He has jeopardized potential civil action by the family. If that isn't enough, he has also second-guessed police, the very people he is supposed to be protecting as minister. And of course, he was not there at the scene of the incident. Premier, in light of these examples of inexcusable interference by Minister Kwinter, should the minister continue in his job?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): Yes, he should. Let me tell you that we have no stronger champion in this Legislature, when it comes to our Ontario police and the sacrifices they make and the work they do day in and day out on behalf of the people of Ontario, than is to be found in our Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Mr Dunlop: I'd like to refresh the Premier's memory on something. Back in 1998 you asked—

Interjection.

Hon Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I am compelled as Minister of Citizenship and Immigration to ask the member behind John Baird, Jim Wilson, to retract that statement.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order. I'm very pleased members are trying to get some decorum in here. If there was an unparliamentary word the member said, I ask him to withdraw. I did not hear the word.

Member from Simcoe North.

Mr Dunlop: I think this is a very serious issue. I'd like to refresh the Premier's memory. Back in 1998 you asked for Bob Runciman's resignation when the name of a mother of a young offender was mentioned in a throne speech. The mother had even consented to her name being used in that throne speech. Here's what you said about this in the *Ottawa Citizen* on April 25, 1998: "This has turned from a question of competence to a question of integrity."

Bob Runciman did the honourable thing. He showed integrity and he stepped aside until his name was actually cleared. In light of the fact that Minister Kwinter has commented on a case that is before the province's special investigations unit, will you ask Minister Kwinter to do what is honourable, to show integrity and resign?

Hon Mr McGuinty: Minister Kwinter has my full support.

ELECTRICITY RESTRUCTURING

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My next question, of course, is also about hydroelectricity. I simply want to ask this question: Given that hydro privatization was such a disaster under Mike Harris, that privatization and deregulation in California was such a disaster, why do you think that by simply taking the Conservative policy and wrapping some red ribbons around it, hydro privatization and deregulation will suddenly be a success for you?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): The Minister of Energy.

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): The member opposite just doesn't get it. We are regulating the price of electricity. We are using the base assets to manage that. We do need private investment in new supply to help us meet the demand we'll have for approximately 25,000 new megawatts of power in the next 16 years. We have to have that.

1500

The other thing the member wants to do is prevent the development of renewable electricity. All of that is happening in the private sector. It's happening on small farms with biomass; it's happening on larger farms with wind; it's happening all over the world. This model not only rejects the California model, it makes sure it will never happen here in Ontario. Unlike the member opposite, this party understands what went wrong there, and when you look at this legislation, you'll see that we reject the California model. We adopt an Ontario model that will prevent a 40% increase in the price of electricity like we had under Mr Hampton's NDP government in the early 1990s.

Mr Hampton: This government obviously wants to try to take the debate anywhere but the debate on priva-

tization. Public power does not rule out energy efficiency; in fact, it accommodates it. It does not rule out alternative energy; in fact, it accommodates it.

I just want to point out to you: After California got in trouble with the privatization and deregulation move, what did they do? They created the California Power Authority, but it hasn't brought power rates down. California is going to continue to pay those very high rates for many years.

So I ask the minister again, since you've adopted Mike Harris's hydro privatization scheme lock, stock and barrel—yes, you've put a few red ribbons around the side—how do you think you can make this any more affordable than it was under the Conservatives when people's hydro bills skyrocketed? How do you plan to make hydro privatization look different now?

Hon Mr Duncan: I'll try to explain it as simply as I can to the member opposite. Unlike California, we're regulating price and we're using our hydroelectric and nuclear assets to do that. I would say to the member opposite, the Ontario Clean Air Alliance has endorsed our plan, the Consumers Council of Canada has endorsed our plan, and Constellation NewEnergy has endorsed our plan. We have had letters of support from the Dominion Bond Rating Service Ltd. What do you have against them?

I'd also say to the member opposite, somebody who opposes our plan was Tom Adams. He was a full supporter of the previous government's plan.

Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): No, he wasn't.

Hon Mr Duncan: Oh, yes, he was. Let me tell you what he said. Here's what he said to the standing committee on resources development: "We are strongly in favour" of Bill 35. "In our view, there is no serious alternative to Bill 35 as it applies to electricity."

I know that you're onside with him. He's opposed to our bill, because we're undoing Bill 35 and we're undoing the mess you left when you had the chance to fix it.

PROTECTION OF PRIVACY

Ms Laurel C. Broten (Etobicoke-Lakeshore): My question is for the Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet. Minister, today the Information and Privacy Commissioner, Ann Cavoukian, tabled her annual report. In the past, the Information and Privacy Commissioner has sharply criticized governments for failing to protect privacy and for deliberately interfering with access to information. In fact, in one instance, the former government was found to have committed a *prima facie* contempt of the Legislature for impeding the work of the commissioner. Protecting citizens' privacy as well as ensuring government's transparency are important issues to all Ontarians, and I would ask the minister what judgment has been borne with respect to the conduct of our government by the Information and Privacy Commissioner over the last eight months.

Hon Gerry Phillips (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I might begin, on behalf of the Leg-

islature, by thanking the commissioner for her work. She's an officer of this Legislature, and she and her staff do fine work on our behalf in an important area.

I was pleased that the commissioner and her staff recognized some of the moves we've made as a new government to improve transparency and accountability while protecting personal privacy. In her report, she points out, "The first throne speech from the new government brought a renewed commitment to open and accessible government with the creation of a Democratic Renewal Secretariat." She goes on to point out, "One of the most important actions was the new Ontario government's introduction of the Health Information Protection Act." She also points out that the government "acted quickly to return Hydro One and Ontario Power Generation to the list of institutions covered by the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act."

I was pleased that the commissioner recognized the initial moves we've made, and we will continue to improve the access to information and protection of privacy.

Ms Broten: In the commissioner's report Privacy and Access: A Blueprint for Change, she raises a number of important privacy issues left unresolved by the previous government and which need to be addressed by our government. For example, she calls for private sector privacy legislation, open meetings and reformation of the issues management process. Minister, what is our government doing to address these important and outstanding privacy issues?

Hon Mr Phillips: Thank you again to the member from Etobicoke-Lakeshore. We, like everyone else, received this report just today. Obviously, we'll want a chance to review her recommendations. I will say, though, that we are acting on a number of the areas. One of her recommendations is protection of privacy for private companies. Minister Watson is looking at that and monitoring the performance in BC and Alberta.

As you know, we made some amendments to the Municipal Act to ensure that more open meetings take place in municipalities. We have established a Democratic Renewal Secretariat. One of its key functions is to make sure that our government is transparent, accountable and open. The minister will continue to pursue that.

On behalf of the Legislature, we take seriously the recommendations she's made. We've already made some very significant steps, as she points out on page 1 of her recommendations, and we will be following up on the recommendations she's got in this report.

AGRICULTURE PROGRAMS

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): My question is to the Minister of Agriculture. You've tried to explain away the largest agricultural budget cut in the history of the province of Ontario by saying the drop is due to the end of a few special programs, one being the funding to farmers affected by BSE, or mad cow disease. The money you promised to the industry has yet to flow, and

now the possibility of any future funds going directly to farmers has been written off.

Today, Alberta cattle farmers are complaining that the government funds allocated went to the processors rather than to front-line producers, one American company reportedly receiving \$33 million. Minister, will the Ontario farmers suffer the same as their Alberta counterparts and see the only money you allocate to BSE go to big industry? And how can you accept the cut to your budget when you know the borders are still closed and the farmers are still in need of assistance?

Hon Steve Peters (Minister of Agriculture and Food): I've never heard a question so much all over the board. Let's just deal with BSE. In Ontario—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Does the member for Oxford need an answer?

Mr Hardeman: Yes, Speaker.

The Speaker: Then you should let me listen to the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon Steve Peters: I'd encourage the member, for starters, to sit down and review the detailed estimates that have been tabled today, because some of the figures he's using are not accurate.

It's important to demonstrate as well that we have flowed over \$92 million of Ontario money toward assisting the farmers of this province. As well, we signed the agricultural policy framework in December 2003, about which your previous minister couldn't come to an agreement with the federal government. We were able to come to an agreement with the feds and we have an agreement in place that has benefited farmers all across Canada, because with the signing on of Newfoundland and Labrador two weeks ago negative margins are now being covered. You weren't able to achieve that. This government, because of a new spirit of co-operation with the federal government, was able to achieve that.

As well, we're going to be announcing funding in the very near future for the mature animal program, which is going to help increase slaughter capacity in this province.

Mr Hardeman: Minister, you also stated that the agriculture budget cut is a result of the signing of the agricultural policy framework and the money it will save the provincial government. Well, some farmers still have an issue with the way the case program pays out safety net funding in their commodities. Farmers who grow grains and oilseeds are concerned they will no longer have the market revenue program when it runs out. Fruit and vegetable growers worry about the self-directed risk management.

Minister, your election platform stated that these safety net companion programs would continue until new programs were developed, tested and proven. Will you, in the face of this massive budget cut—incidentally, 20% of your budget—tell the farmers of Ontario that you will continue to fund these programs, as you promised? Would you make it a straight answer—it's not a convoluted question—yes or no? Will you support Ontario farmers with the Ontario safety net programs that you promised?

1510

Hon Mr Peters: Again, I encourage the member to review the detailed estimates because, for the first time in years in this province, we're actually going to be putting capital dollars into assisting agricultural operations across Ontario, something your government didn't follow through on. We're going to come to the table with nutrient management money.

As well, I'd encourage the honourable member to have a look at what Agricorp is doing right now. They have a working discussion document out there that is looking at a price insurance model modelled on the Alberta program. Have a look at that. We'd very much welcome your comments on that. As well, I'd encourage the member to talk to the Ontario Agricultural Commodity Council because we have been working and we are looking at trying to develop a replacement program for the market revenue program. We are looking toward developing a new program for SDRM.

I would encourage the member to get out of his high seat here in the House, get out and start talking to farmers and realize how we are consulting, we are working. We're going to make sure—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): My question is to the Minister of Health. You have stood in this House on several occasions and talked about the need for accrediting foreign-trained doctors. You have written letters to me stating the same thing, that we need to accredit them, and you have said, quite rightly, that it is the fastest, easiest way that we can get the 4,000 doctors we need in this province, because there are 4,000 of them here.

On May 26, Brad Sinclair from the Ontario International Medical Graduate Clearinghouse—that's a mouthful—was quoted in the *Toronto Sun* as stating, "Could we do more? I suspect we could, but it's a question of resources and the actual capacity to assess these people." My question to you, Mr Minister, is, when are they going to get the resources so we can get the doctors we need?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I find it interesting to hear questions about doctors from a representative of the New Democratic Party, since the fact of the matter is that the biggest reason we have a doctor shortage in this province is the decision they made while they were in government to shut down the production line for doctors.

But on the matter the member raises, which is about the assessment and training of international medical graduates, I first mention to the member that there will be an announcement from our government next week. We have firmly committed to a further enhancement of our capacity to assess and train foreign-trained doctors. I think it's important to note that doctors come to our land—there's an estimate of 1,400 foreign-trained

doctors in our province, not 4,000—from 1,500 different medical schools around the world. There is, across the world, no common assessment that tells us, frankly, whether a doctor who has been produced at this school meets a standard that we would consider to be appropriate for Ontario.

But on the key point, I agree with the member that we need to enhance our capacity to assess and train foreign-trained doctors, and that's why we've committed to do that in our government's budget, increasing the number to 200.

Mr Prue: On Saturday, June 12, just a couple of days ago, Jan Wong in the *Globe and Mail* wrote quite a brilliant little article, and I'd like to quote some parts of it.

Number one: "Canada encourages people such as Dr. Zafar to immigrate. But then it erects licensing barriers that take years to overcome, if ever. Incredibly, top scorers on the written exam aren't even guaranteed a spot in the subsequent round of clinical tests."

She goes on to say, "The Ontario College of Physicians and Surgeons, once an obstacle to foreign doctors, is now urging expanded accreditation," and then goes on to talk about how these people are so frustrated that they are taking the unusual step of a class action suit with a lawyer living in my riding, Ms Doobay, and says, "She thinks she'll win too. In 2001, five foreign doctors, including two who staged hunger strikes, brought a similar complaint before the BC Council of Human Rights. In 2002, the council awarded compensation ranging from \$7,500 to more than \$60,000."

My question is, is this the unusual step these doctors have to take to be accredited? Do they have to go to court, or are you going to change the laws?

Hon Mr Smitherman: The member opposite obviously has no understanding of the issue at hand. Change the laws? What would you wish me to do: in the sweep of a hand say that anyone who presents and says, "Hey, I'm a foreign-trained doctor. Where do I get to practise in Ontario?"—that's not the way it works. Regrettably, it's a complex situation, because we have an obligation to ensure that these foreign-trained doctors are trained to a standard that all of us in Ontario would wish to see in our communities. So it is a little more complex than the member presents.

The fact of the matter is that as a government, we're enormously committed to this because, like all members, we know people in our communities who have skills and abilities that they want to put to work on behalf of Ontarians, and we want them to do that too. That's why we're moving forward, doubling the number of spots that are available for training for international medical graduates to 200. This expansion is significant. This expansion comes at a significant fiscal cost, but on this file we know that we have more to do. That's why next week we'll make an announcement at the Ontario International Medical Graduate Clearinghouse, which for the first time brings together all of those doctors in one place so that we can assess them against one another and have the

capacity to produce more of them in communities all across the province of Ontario.

QUALITY OF LIFE

Mr Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): My question is for the Minister of Finance. My Thornhill constituents have many concerns about the future of our province. They are particularly concerned about their future quality of life for themselves and their children. Canada has always prided itself on the high quality of life that its citizens have, something recognized by the United Nations. Our quality of life is determined by many things, including health, education, economic development and transportation. Mr Minister, what public investments are we making to improve a family's quality of life in Ontario?

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): Perhaps the best way to answer that is to make specific reference to my friend's riding, the riding of Thornhill. I know it fairly well because I represented part of that area from 1987 to 1990.

Specifically in the community of Thornhill, as a result of the initiatives we've taken in the budget, I think my friend is going to see, immediately, improvement in what goes on with the children who are in schools in that area. I think he knows the need for health care facilities right across York region and certainly in the city of Vaughan, and that family health teams and perhaps a community health care centre may be located in that area.

Perhaps one of the biggest issues, the one that affects people every day, is that as we start to fund a new generation of public transit, the gridlock that grips his community, my communities and so many of the GTA communities is going to start being relieved by very high-quality public transit.

Mr Racco: I agree that we must have good services to maintain a high quality of life in the province. However, we must also work toward lowering our accumulated deficit, a debt left to us by the previous NDP and PC governments. It is my understanding that the interest alone is costing taxpayers approximately \$11 billion, and if we would use that \$11 billion, we would build all the subways we need in the GTA. But we can't.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Just impose more health taxes.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): The member from Niagara Centre, would you come to order, please.

Mr Racco: That \$11 billion could have been spent to build subways all over the province of Ontario. Tell my constituents of Thornhill, Minister, what we are doing to turn around our fiscal deficit that those two governments left us.

Hon Mr Sorbara: I'd be pleased to do that because I think it probably is the most significant theme in the budget that we presented a month ago today in this House.

Given our financial circumstances, we have had to bring in a new revenue mechanism called the Ontario health premium. But equally important, we are putting

into place a constraint on expenditures which will permit us only to raise expenditures at a rate of 1.9%, on average, over the course of the next four years. The fact is that as our revenues and as our economy strengthen, and we keep those tight controls on expenditures, we will get this province out of the deficit we inherited, we will end the deficit spiral and we will put Ontario back into good, strong financial health.

That is the main message in the budget that we presented, and I thank my friend for the question.

VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): My question is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. On March 31, 77 days ago in this House in response to a question on the double-hatter firefighter issue, the minister said, "I have met with the professional firefighters and have told them that I would like to have mediation. If we can't do that, then I'm going to bring forward legislation."

Apparently, the minister has been unable to successfully establish a mediation process which would protect double-hatters' right to volunteer in their home communities. That being the case, why hasn't the minister introduced legislation, as he said he would 77 days ago?

Hon Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services): I thank the member for his question. I'm sure he knows that municipalities have responsibility to provide an effective fire service for their citizens. We're also very mindful of the very valuable service that volunteers provide. Having said all of that, we think it's important that municipalities work through the collective bargaining process, that they do it in conjunction with their fire chiefs, with the professional firefighters and with the municipalities to come up with a resolution that will serve the people of Ontario in the most effective way.

1520

Mr Arnott: In this House, on March 31, the minister led us to believe that he was sympathetic and somewhat supportive of double-hatter firefighters. Now he has washed his hands of the issue. Action on this issue is needed immediately, before the House rises this summer. The minister must introduce legislation to protect double-hatters. I continue to receive calls from fire chiefs and firefighters across the province, asking for protection for double-hatters. The fire marshal of Ontario has recently reconfirmed his position, in a letter to me, that there needs to be legislation brought in to protect double-hatters. The minister's own policy adviser has written recently "that the number of two-hatters currently being utilized throughout the province is continuing to decline at a significant rate."

My question is very simple. How many more double-hatters will be forced to resign because of union threats, and how many more rural communities will be made less safe, before this government takes action to protect them?

Hon Mr Kwinter: The member has put forward two propositions. On the one hand he's saying, "How many

double-hatters do we have to have before it's an issue?" The other one is, "How can we keep communities safe?" They're not necessarily the same. I'm saying to you that my preference is that we work this out with the fire-fighters, with the fire chiefs and with the municipalities. In the meantime, the fire marshal is there in his responsibility to make sure that no citizen in Ontario is put at risk because of the lack of fire facilities.

TORONTO POLICE SERVICE

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I have a question for the Premier. Premier, I continue to be very worried about what's happening on the Toronto Police Services Board. I've asked you repeatedly, and your minister repeatedly, to bring in special legislation to have Norm Gardner removed from the Toronto Police Services Board. As you know, it's in a crisis now, at a very critical time. Gardner cannot perform his duties because he has been suspended, yet he still refuses to resign. Now it appears that he spent taxpayers' money in a lavish fashion. So I've decided, because your minister won't move on it, to introduce a Fire Norm Gardner Act. It will be special legislation allowing you to remove this obstacle to better policing in this city. Premier, will you at least support my bill?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): No, I will not support the bill. The minister himself has spoken to this time and time again. I agree entirely with the minister. We have a responsibility to respect due process. It is unfolding before us. It may not be as quickly as we desire, we may wish we had other options, but the fact of the matter is, due process counts for something in this province and in this country, and we will wait for it to unfold.

Ms Churley: I have to remind you, Premier, that when you were sitting in the opposition benches, you didn't worry about due process when you were calling on the then government to fire Eleanor Clitheroe from Hydro. Remember that? You can do the same thing here. It is your responsibility to be concerned about what's happening to the people of Ontario and the Toronto Police Services Board at this time. You've simply got to stop washing your hands of this problem. The provincial government appointed Norm Gardner and you can therefore pass legislation to fire him.

Premier, I can't tell you again how important this is right now, given what's going on in the Toronto Police Services Board. I know everybody's asking him to resign, but he won't do it. It's a big problem. His appointment is not up until December. Members of the board walked out because they couldn't get their way. Remember that? They broke quorum. I'm asking you again, will you support my bill to get rid of Norm Gardner so we can get the police services board in Toronto on track again?

Hon Mr McGuinty: It's really the kind of thing that the Attorney General should address, but there's something important about due process and the law. If we

decide that we're going to set it aside in this particular instance for this particular individual, where do we draw the line? I think it's important in this case, and each and every case, that we respect due process and the law. That's what we're going to do.

WATER QUALITY

Mrs Carol Mitchell (Huron-Bruce): My question is for the Minister of the Environment. Yesterday and today in this House, the leader of the third party questioned why, in the 2004 budget paper on page 44, water and waste water projects are considered to be programs contributing to healthier Ontarians. The leader of the third party does not seem to understand that programs and services that support healthier Ontarians are delivered through many ministries. Minister, can you please clarify for the benefit of the leader of the third party why municipal water and waste water projects are considered to be part of the programs contributing to healthier Ontarians?

Hon Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment): It's a very important question and I'm happy to have this opportunity to share with the members of this Legislature, the leader of the third party and the people of Ontario and to make very clear that I believe the Premier pointed out earlier today that keeping water safe to drink is a broader determinant of health. The Premier's words are backed up time and again throughout this very important document that this government is committed to implementing: the recommendations from Mr Justice O'Connor. Clearly—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order, the member for Toronto-Danforth.

Hon Mrs Dombrowsky: Justice O'Connor made it very clear in his document that the distribution system is the final barrier before delivery to the consumer's tap. Even when the water leaving the treatment plant is of the highest quality, if precautions are not taken, its quality can seriously deteriorate. In extreme cases, dangerous contamination can occur. A well-maintained distribution system is a critical component of a safe drinking water system, and that is what we are committed to investing in for the people of Ontario.

Mrs Mitchell: It is interesting that the Minister of the Environment has pointed us to Commissioner O'Connor's reference to the importance of maintaining and upgrading water and waste water infrastructure to ensure our public's health. Does Commissioner O'Connor—

Interjection.

The Speaker: I'm going to warn the member for Toronto-Danforth. The next time I'll be naming you.

Mrs Mitchell: Minister, does Commissioner O'Connor make any reference to the province's responsibility to protect public health by funding water and waste water projects?

Hon Mrs Dombrowsky: Justice O'Connor provided the government of Ontario and the people of Ontario with

an excellent framework that I'm very proud to say we are committed to implementing. In the O'Connor document, Commissioner O'Connor clearly indicates in recommendation 78 that, "The provincial government should ensure that programs relating to the safety of drinking water are adequately funded." When we came to government, what we sadly came to understand was that the infrastructure in this province was in serious condition. So obviously this government, because of our priority in ensuring that we provide safe water for the people in the province, wants to ensure that they have the resources they need to make sure that happens.

SERVICES FOR DISABLED CHILDREN

Mrs Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Yesterday in response to a question from my colleague, you said you would be giving a 3% increase to the base funding of children's treatment centres. Certainly this is most welcome and appreciated. However, there is a need for multi-year funding in order to allow the centres to better respond to the needs of the children with cerebral palsy, spina bifida and other disorders. Furthermore, KidsAbility in Waterloo has a rapidly growing waiting list of children. It's presently at 900 children and will continue to grow. I'm asking you today, Minister, will you commit to multi-year funding and will you commit to providing KidsAbility with the funding to meet the unique needs of a growing community with a waiting list of more than 900 children?

Hon Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): I'd like to thank the member opposite for the question, and all the members from the Kitchener-Waterloo area for bringing this issue to my attention. This 3% annual funding will be multi-year funding. We know the needs out there for the treatment centres across the province.

As well, we will be giving \$24 million in capital funding for treatment centres across the province. The specific centres that will be receiving this money, that information, will come out in the weeks ahead.

1530

PETITIONS

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington): I have a petition, signed by several thousand residents of Burlington, to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas,

"Elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need;

"Those with reduced ability to pay—including seniors, low-income families and the working poor—will be

forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments" in hospitals;

"Elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs" as a result; and

"There was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province."

This petition has my signature of support.

OPTOMETRISTS

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads as follows:

"Whereas the last funding agreement between the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and the Ontario Association of Optometrists expired March 31, 2000; and

"Whereas the optometric fees for OHIP-insured services remain unchanged since 1989; and

"Whereas the lack of any fee increase for 15 years has created a crisis situation for optometrists; and

"Whereas fees for OHIP services do not provide for fair or reasonable compensation for the professional services of optometrists in that they no longer cover the costs of providing eye examinations; and

"Whereas it is in the best interests of patients and the government to have a new funding agreement for insured services that will ensure the most vulnerable members of society are able to receive the eye care they need;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care resume negotiations immediately with the OAO and appoint a mediator to help with the negotiation process in order to ensure that the optometrists can continue to provide quality eye care services to patients in Ontario."

This was sent to me by the Ontario Association of Optometrists. I agree with the petition, and I have affixed my signature to it.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mrs Maria Van Bommel (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): I have a petition here that says:

"Whereas the citizens of Kent county and Chatham had no direct say in the creation of the municipality of Chatham-Kent in 1997; and

"Whereas the Ontario government, by regulation and legislation, forced the amalgamation in accordance with the Meyboom report against the will of the elected local and county officials; and

"Whereas the municipality has not delivered the promised streamlined, more efficient and accountable local government, nor the provision of improved services at reduced costs;

"Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, demand that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario immediately rescind the forced amalgamation order and return our local municipal government to the citizens in a two-tier model of government to be approved by referendum by the electorate...."

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I'm pleased to present a petition on behalf of the campground recreational vehicles coalition: Al Robinson, Roger Faulkner, Gary Bruno, Melissa Cline and Brad Campkin. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas recreational trailers kept at parks and campgrounds in Ontario are being assessed by the Municipal Property Assessment Corp (MPAC) and are subject to property taxes; and

"Whereas owners of these trailers are seasonal and occasional residents who contribute to the local" tourist "economy ... without requiring significant municipal services; and

"Whereas the added burden of this taxation will make it impossible for many families of modest income to afford their holiday sites at parks and campgrounds;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That these seasonal trailers not be subject to retroactive taxation for the year 2003; and that the tax not be imposed in 2004; and that no such tax be introduced without consultation with owners of the trailers, trailer parks, municipal governments, businesses, the tourism sector and other stakeholders."

I'm pleased to sign and endorse this on behalf of the thousands of people looking forward to summer holidays.

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Mr Kim Craiton (Niagara Falls): I'm pleased to table this petition on behalf of my constituents and residents who have asked me to do so. It contains 1,700 signatures and is asking the government to consider supporting chiropractic services under the OHIP plan.

Mrs Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): I have a petition here for the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Re: support for chiropractic services in Ontario health insurance plan

"Whereas,

"Elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need;

"Those with reduced ability to pay—including seniors, low-income families and the working poor—will be

forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments;

"Elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

"There was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province."

I affix my signature here as well.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario which reads as follows:

"Because social assistance rates were slashed by 21.6% in 1995, and with the increase in the cost of living, that cut is worth about 34.4% today; and

"Because current social assistance rates do not allow recipients to meet their cost of living; and

"Because the people of Ontario deserve an adequate standard of living and are guaranteed such by the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; and

"Because the jury at the inquest into the death of Kimberly Rogers recommended that social assistance rates be reviewed so that they reflect the actual costs of living;

"We demand that the Ontario government immediately increase the shelter portion of Ontario Works and Ontario disability support program benefits to the average Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp rent levels and index social assistance to the cost of living."

I agree with the petitioners and I have signed the petition as well.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas recreational trailers kept at parks and campgrounds in Ontario are being assessed by the Municipal Property Assessment Corp (MPAC) and are subject to property taxes; and

"Whereas owners of these trailers are seasonal and occasional residents who contribute to the local tourism economy without requiring significant municipal services; and

"Whereas the added burden of this taxation will make it impossible for many families of modest income to afford their holiday sites at parks and campgrounds;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That these seasonal trailers not be subject to retroactive taxation for the year 2003; and that the tax not be imposed in 2004; and that no such tax be introduced without consultation with owners of the trailers and trailer parks, municipal governments, businesses, the tourism sector and other stakeholders."

I'll affix my signature to this petition.

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Re: support for chiropractic services in Ontario health insurance plan:

"Whereas,

"Elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need;

"Those with reduced ability to pay—including seniors, low-income families and the working poor—will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments;

"Elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

"There was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province."

I agree and I've signed this petition.

Mr Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): I have a petition I'd like to table today from some constituents in the riding of Oakville, where they call upon the provincial government to not delist chiropractic services.

There are 220 signatures affixed.

1540

HEALTH CARE

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Liberal government has announced in their budget that they are delisting key health services such as routine eye exams, chiropractic and physiotherapy services,

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To reverse the delisting of eye exams, chiropractic and physiotherapy services and restore funding for these important and necessary services."

I sign my name in full support.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I have a petition from my constituents in Parry Sound-Muskoka and it reads:

"Taxpayer protection:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the McGuinty government's 2004 budget will break the taxpayer protection law by not conducting a referendum on tax increases; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty signed an election pledge on September 11, 2003, not to raise taxes without the explicit consent of voters through a referendum; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty promised in TV ads not to raise taxes by one penny on working families; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty pledged in writing to obey the taxpayer protection law, which requires a referendum before increasing taxes;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To ensure that all of the McGuinty government's tax increases are put before the people of Ontario in a referendum."

I support this petition and affix my signature to it.

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Mr John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): I too have a petition supporting chiropractic services in Ontario.

"Whereas,

"Elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need;

"Those with reduced ability to pay—including seniors, low-income families and the working poor—will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments;

"Elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

"There was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province."

I support this petition, and I've signed my name to it.

FISH HATCHERY PROGRAM

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I have a petition that reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ministry of Natural Resources' provincial fish hatchery program annually stocks over 10

million fish into 1,200 water bodies within the province of Ontario; and

“Whereas provincial fish hatcheries contain unique genetic strains of indigenous fish species; and

“Whereas recreational fishing is a multi-billion-dollar industry and a huge contributor to tourism and the economy throughout the province of Ontario; and

“Whereas the world-class Great Lakes salmon fishery, as well as many local fisheries throughout the province, are dependent on the Ministry of Natural Resources’ fish stocking program;

“Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the government of Ontario and the Minister of Natural Resources to refrain from any cutbacks or cancellations to this provincially significant program.”

I affix my name in support.

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I have received thousands of petitions to do with chiropractic services from my constituents in Parry Sound-Muskoka. This reads:

“To: Legislative Assembly of Ontario

“Re: support for chiropractic services in Ontario health insurance plan:

“Whereas,

“Elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need;

“Those with reduced ability to pay—including seniors, low-income families and the working poor—will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments;

“Elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

“There was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province.”

I support this petition and sign it.

WATER QUALITY

Mr John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): I have a petition concerning the new Ontario Safe Drinking Water Act, 2002, Ontario regulation 170/03.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario government is implementing regulation 170/03, and in doing so will affect town halls, churches and private property owners including small

businesses, local community centres and campgrounds; and

“Whereas meeting the requirements of regulation 170/03 has meant and will mean excessive costs and financial burdens for all drinking water system owners; and

“Whereas there is no demonstrated proof that this new regulation will improve drinking water that has been and continues to be safe in rural municipalities; and

“Whereas Ontario regulation 170/03 was passed without adequate consultation with stakeholders throughout Ontario; and

“Whereas stakeholders should have been consulted concerning the necessity, efficacy, economic, environmental and health impacts on rural Ontario;

“Therefore, be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario abandon the implementation of and immediately repeal regulation 170/03, as well as amending the pertinent enabling legislation.”

I support this petition, and I affix my name to it.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ADAMS MINE LAKE ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004

SUR LE LAC DE LA MINE ADAMS

Mrs Dombrowsky moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 49, An Act to prevent the disposal of waste at the Adams Mine site and to amend the Environmental Protection Act in respect of the disposal of waste in lakes / Projet de loi 49, Loi visant à empêcher l'élimination de déchets à la mine Adams et à modifier la Loi sur la protection de l'environnement en ce qui concerne l'élimination de déchets dans des lacs.

Hon Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment): I'm delighted to have the opportunity to open third reading debate on what I consider to be a very important piece of legislation. I would like to say at the beginning that I will be sharing this hour with my colleagues the member from Brampton Centre, the member from Etobicoke North, the member from Prince Edward-Hastings and the member from Perth-Middlesex.

I appreciate the opportunity to discuss the progress of what I believe is an important piece of legislation. Bill 49, the Adams Mine Lake Act, will protect and improve upon the high standard of living enjoyed by Ontarians. The Adams Mine Lake Act shows that the McGuinty government is serious in its commitment to protecting health and the quality of life in our great province.

All Ontario residents deserve to live in safe, clean, livable communities. The Adams Mine Lake Act, which puts an end to the Adams mine landfill proposal, is long overdue. Local residents have long voiced concerns about the project and its potential effects on their communities. They need to be able to get on with their

lives, secure in the knowledge that the proposed landfill has been stopped once and for all. We have listened to their concerns, and we have acted.

In just a few moments, I will speak about the actions we have taken. I will also update the Legislature on the contents of Bill 49 by outlining three amendments that were made following the clause-by-clause review conducted by the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly on June 3, 2004. But first, I want to remind honourable members of the context for Bill 49.

On April 5, I announced a new waste diversion strategy for Ontario. The strategy included a commitment to release a discussion paper this spring that would serve as the basis for public discussion of options to achieve Ontario's 60% diversion target. The strategy also promised the appointment of an expert panel to make recommendations on ways to improve the environmental assessment process.

Ontario must improve upon its current 28% waste diversion rate. While we have made good progress, we are still sending more than nine million tonnes of waste for disposal each year. This is material that is not being managed but is simply being deposited in our precious lands or in landfills beyond our jurisdiction. This is clearly an unacceptable situation.

1550

Earlier this month, I released a discussion paper on waste diversion. It will serve as the basis for a series of public forums we are holding across the province, and the first one will be in Kingston on Friday. We want to hear from Ontarians about how we can meet the new waste diversion target.

One of our top priorities is improving diversion rates for organic materials. Organics are now a large part of the waste stream. Organics account for 38% of municipal waste and 11% of industrial, commercial and institutional waste.

Clearly, any successful waste management strategy must include effective management of organics. Getting a handle on organics will take us a long way toward meeting our diversion goals. We are seeking input on a number of questions related to organics, including a phased-in ban on these and other recyclable materials that find their way to landfills, new means and technologies for collecting and processing organic material, and sustainable markets for products made from processed organic material.

The discussion paper also examines how to get a renewed commitment to waste diversion from the industrial, commercial and institutional sector. While we have regulations in place that require source separation in some industrial and commercial sectors, there has been much more emphasis on the residential blue box program. We are proposing to review the regulations that apply to the industrial and commercial sectors and enforce them more consistently. We also propose that the largest waste generators be required to publicly report their waste diversion rates and to phase in public reporting of waste diversion rates by other waste generators on a sector-by-sector basis. We are consulting on the best

ways of providing training to small businesses to enable them to increase the amount of waste they divert.

New waste diversion technologies clearly must be a part of the solution. In the discussion paper, we raise the issue of streamlining the approvals process under the Environmental Protection Act for such technologies. Reducing packaging and increasing the recycled content in products and packaging is another important opportunity. This is an important opportunity to explore in those areas. We want to hear about how we can improve programs in this area by working with other levels of government.

Finally, as with all efforts aimed at protecting our land, air and water, we need strong public co-operation and participation if we are to succeed. I believe that the people of the province of Ontario very much want that leadership. They want to participate, to protect our environment for future generations. The discussion paper outlines the need to work with stakeholders to deliver effective public education on reducing, reusing and recycling.

Our approach to waste management also addresses some of the underlying issues that have been a source of uncertainty in Ontario's environmental assessment process. I will shortly announce the membership of an expert advisory panel to identify ways to improve the environmental assessment process. We want to provide greater certainty and timeliness while maintaining or enhancing environmental protection. As well, we have entered into a draft framework agreement with the federal government to coordinate the environmental assessments of projects that are subject to both the provincial and federal processes.

The Adams Mine Lake Act gives us an opportunity to put an end to a project that is symbolic of the larger problems with waste management in Ontario. The proposed legislation amends the Environmental Protection Act to prevent the use of lakes as landfills. For the purposes of Bill 49, a lake includes a body of surface water that results from human activities, that directly influences or is influenced by groundwater, and that includes land that is covered by water on the date the proposed legislation comes into effect.

Bill 49 will revoke any approvals and permits related to the Adams mine project that were issued by the Ministry of the Environment prior to the effective date of the legislation. It will also nullify any applications for permits under consideration by the ministry as of the date the legislation comes into effect. The legislation will extinguish any agreements of purchase or any sale of the adjacent crown land that may have been entered into between the Ministry of Natural Resources and the owner of the Adams mine.

Any related legal action against the crown that may exist on the effective date of the legislation is extinguished by the legislation. It will also prevent any further legal action being taken against the crown as a result of the legislation.

Bill 49 also outlines a plan to provide reasonable compensation for the owner of the Adams mine proposal. The

bill also makes it clear that the Adams mine property is not being expropriated. I believe this bill protects the environment and people of Ontario, while being fair to the owner of the Adams mine.

The health and well-being of the people of Ontario is our overriding concern. The local community has voiced concerns that they believe the Adams mine landfill would contaminate their ground and surface water supplies.

For this government, the protection of our water resources is paramount. At the end of the day, we remain unconvinced that the Adams mine proposal can be operated safely to protect the environment. We promised to address the situation, and we did. I believe Bill 49 gives Ontarians the confidence that their environment is being protected and that their interests are being addressed by the government.

I would now like to bring the honourable members up to date on Bill 49's progress. Hearings on Bill 49 were held by the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly on May 20 in Windsor and May 21 in Milton. A total of 18 presentations were made to the committee over those two days. I was happy to participate in that process. I spoke to the committee in Windsor and participated in the clause-by-clause review on June 3.

As part of the review, I recommended three amendments to the Adams Mine Lake Act.

The first amendment allows Notre Development Corp to share in any compensation. Notre Development was the original owner of the Adams mine site. The amendment also provides limited compensation for expenses incurred, but not paid, prior to first reading of Bill 49.

The second amendment simply rearranges material already in the bill for ease of understanding; the material is related to reasonable expenses for which compensation will be paid.

The third amendment makes it clear that the primary focus of Bill 49 is the placement of waste in a lake. Without this change, the bill would have prohibited the use of waste disposal sites on which there was a large pond for the management of storm water, or on which there was a lake that was in no way related to the waste management operation.

These amendments were accepted by the committee.

I think it's also important to note, for the members of this assembly, that there were no additional motions for amendments made at the committee. There were none.

The point of Bill 49, the Adams Mine Lake Act, is to protect our environment and respect the wishes of our communities. I believe that when we vote on Bill 49, we have a great opportunity for all of us to make a real difference on behalf of Ontario's environment and on behalf of the people of Ontario.

I call on the members of the Ontario Legislature to support this bill that will protect our environment for generations to come.

1600

Mrs Linda Jeffrey (Brampton Centre): It is my pleasure to speak with regard to Bill 49, An Act to prevent the disposal of waste at the Adams Mine site and

to amend the Environmental Protection Act in respect of the disposal of waste in lakes.

I had the honour of chairing the hearings on this issue in Milton and Windsor, and I wanted to use the time I have today to talk about some of the delegations that appeared before us. I was very impressed with the candour particularly at the meetings, and the intelligence. I'm sure that other members who are here today who appeared and listened to the delegates were also very impressed with the quality of the delegates who came before us.

I want to talk about some of the delegations that appeared before us. One of the groups that came before us was the CAW. Their written submission and also their verbal submission indicated that the "CAW Windsor Regional Environmental Council represents more than 40,000 members on the issue of the environment.

"As an organization that represents members from Windsor to Sarnia, we have a unique understanding regarding the issue of waste disposal."

Although they had concerns about the way waste disposal from Toronto was being addressed and handled, they supported and applauded this bill as "a much-needed action to protect the traditional lands of northern Ontario."

They went on to tell us, "There is no debate that all landfills eventually contaminate our environment and pose a serious threat to our health. Therefore the government has a responsibility to take progressive, protective action on the issue of waste management."

Another individual who came before us was Daniel Acciavatti, a state representative in the Michigan House of Representatives. He came across the border to appear before our committee and spoke very eloquently about this issue. In particular, he was trying to represent his area in Michigan with regard to truck traffic, but he indicated that he felt, "What truly matters is whether the decision to abandon this particular site is followed by meaningful action that demonstrates both the vision and political will to get the job done."

He indicated to us that he was very impressed with Ontario's efforts to reduce the amount of waste going through the waste stream. He emphasized the provincial recycling programs and the other ways we want to reduce solid waste generation. He was also impressed by our decision to achieve an Ontario-wide diversion goal of 60% by 2008. He spoke quite a bit on that issue.

Another individual who appeared before us was Martha McSherry. She's from Kirkland Lake and is a member of the Responsible Environmental and Economic Prosperity Association—REEPA for short. This is a group that has existed for 15 years, since the Adams Mine site was first targeted for Toronto's waste in 1989. At that time, they felt that the pits were "in direct contact with groundwater, levelling off with the surrounding water table." They indicated to us that the "Adams Mine site is south of the Arctic watershed where water systems are divided, flowing north and south. Waters flowing from the Adams Mine site flow into a river system that

feeds a rich farm basin in south Timiskaming, which then flows into the Ottawa River valley....” They felt that Bill 49 was essential to protect the headwaters of that watershed. They thanked our committee, and the Liberal government in particular, and commended us for “taking the leadership to protect water in lakes from waste in the province of Ontario.”

They quoted Minister Dombrowsky as saying, “The endless proposals and challenges around the Adams Mine have created too much uncertainty, and for too long have drained the energy and resources of the local communities.”

At that time, Ms McSherry spoke about citizens opposing the dumping of waste and how they have spent valuable time, resources and energy protecting our environment, which could have been devoted to economic and social development in their own communities.

They spoke about “the Liberal government’s leadership for setting aggressive targets for diversion and recycling, with specific timelines....” They wanted to commend us for that.

In their concluding comments, REEPA commended the Liberal government for “their leadership in preventing the disposal of waste at the Adams Mine site, and to amend the EPA in respect of the disposal of waste in lakes.” They commended “the leadership around waste management in the province, setting targets and timelines.”

We also had a delegation from Mr Tom Adams, who is a councillor in ward 6 in the town of Oakville. He came to speak to us and also provided a written deputation, and I was impressed with his deputation as well. He spoke about the Adams Mine Lake Act and indicated that the “government is making good on its promise to deliver real, positive change to ensure that Ontario can rely on cleaner air, water and land. All Ontario residents deserve a cleaner environment in which to live, work and play.”

He indicated that he felt, “The Adams Mine Lake Act will close the door on a very controversial proposal; a proposal that worried thousands of residents throughout Ontario for its disrespect of the environment. Many people in Ontario were not convinced that the site was safe for use as a landfill. They were concerned that water contamination would result from the use of the site as a landfill.”

He spoke about the issue of Walkerton. He said, “One needs only to mention Walkerton to recall the damage that can result when governments fail to act to protect water quality for the people of Ontario.”

He spoke about Bill 49 intending “to prohibit the use of lakes as landfill sites, to prevent the use of the Adams mine site as a landfill and to deal with matters related to the government taking this action.” He said, “The proposed definition of a lake is to include surface water that results from human activities, and that is directly influenced by or influences groundwater. These are actions that I support. The use of any lake sites for landfill purposes in Ontario is unacceptable. It is unacceptable for local residents and unacceptable for future generations.”

Mr Adams also said, “Bill 49 is a good piece of legislation. In combination with the strategies to support a higher diversion rate from landfills” he felt the Liberal government was moving in the right direction. He said, “I know members of my community will support increasing the local diversion rates. I look forward to working with the provincial government to help find innovative ways to reduce, reuse, and recycle” within his community of Oakville, and he encouraged “every other community across Ontario to do the same. Encouraging the 3Rs makes sense, because it is a made-at-home solution to a made-at-home problem. We should all be responsible for solving our own problems.”

Another group that appeared before the committee was Northwatch. It’s a “regional coalition of environmental and citizen organizations and individual members in northeastern Ontario. Founded in January of 1988 ... has as a priority issues that are of a regional nature: energy use, generation and conservation, forest conservation and wild areas protection, waste management and water quality issues. In addition to acting on these issues as a representative body, Northwatch provides support to local citizens’ groups addressing these and other environmental concerns in their community.” They are “currently working with members and member groups to improve forest management, promote community involvement in mine monitoring and management, and prevent northeastern Ontario from becoming the receiving ground for foreign wastes, including Toronto’s garbage.”

We had a presentation by Pierre Bélanger in Milton. His statement was a very good one, I thought. He spoke very eloquently to the committee. Mr Belanger said:

“We wish to commend the Ontario government for this bold and forceful legislation which puts an end to an unrelenting assault on the Timiskaming watershed, the source of the water we drink and use for agriculture, business and leisure.

“We had come to a point where we despaired of ever finding common sense governance on this issue at Queen’s Park.”

He said that the “Adams mine proposal was fundamentally flawed at its very core. It proposed to dump 20 million tons of municipal waste over 20 years into a leaking fractured rock receptacle. This man-made receptacle has a depth of 600 feet, it extends deep into the aquifer. Indeed, while operating as a mine it required continuous round-the-clock pumping.”

He indicated, “The proposed landfill would have been located just south of the height of land where surface water flows either north to Hudson’s Bay or south to the Ottawa River watershed. The location guaranteed maximum damage to maximum area, had leakage occurred. This area’s lakes and rivers feed the Ottawa River—Pembroke, Arnprior, Renfrew and Ottawa’s drinking water source.”

1610

He indicated, “The proposal included no clay or plastic liners to either contain leachate or exclude contact with natural inflows of groundwater. Instead, it relied on

a highly engineered system to control volume of flow. Touted as 'state of the art,' the system consisted primarily of a granular drainage surround lining the pit walls, a perforated pipe collection network at the very bottom and a massive pumping station feeding a water treatment plant on the surface."

He said, "We applaud the government's forceful legislation."

There were a lot of really great delegations, but I have to say that some stood out head and shoulders above the others.

The Canadian Environmental Law Association also sent a body of writing to us and in their conclusions they said, "... CELA," which is the Canadian Environmental Law Association, "supports Bill 49 and commends the Legislature for attempting to terminate the intractable and highly polarized debate over the proposed Adams mine site landfill."

I'm happy to support Bill 49. I think it was the right thing to do, and I'm glad our government is taking action on it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Ted Arnott): I'm pleased to recognize the member for Etobicoke North.

Mr Shafiq Qaadri (Etobicoke North): Thank you, Speaker, and through you to the people of Ontario: It's a privilege, on behalf of the government side, to speak in support of Bill 49, the Adams Mine Lake Act, 2004.

There are a number of issues that are encompassed by this bill. It's an act to strengthen the Environmental Protection Act, preventing the use of lakes as landfill sites. It has components of just compensation; waste management of some organic waste products produced in Ontario. It is firmly in the public interest with a view to maintaining quality of life. In particular, it helps us deal with the contamination or the toxification of our environment that goes on when we, in a manner that's unchecked, store our solid, non-hazardous wastes.

As well, as has been stated by the Honourable Leona Dombrowsky, our Minister of the Environment, it is a symbolic action, a signal to Ontario, the individuals concerned in waste management and communities at large, that your government is working toward protecting the environment, all the while maintaining the public interest.

I might say that, for me, it's almost an issue of health care, because whereas it may not be directly related, say, to the health of the body, certainly it is to the health of the body politic and to the health of the province of Ontario. As was stated, we're dealing with a very significant amount of solid, non-hazardous waste, something like 20 million tonnes over 20 years.

Speaker, I will remind you, and through you to the people of Ontario, that it was Winston Churchill who said, "Politicians think of the next election, but statesmen think of the next generation." With that, I would like to salute our Minister of the Environment for making within this bill, which is receiving its third reading, choices that will affect not only the clear and present Ontarians of today but generations to come, in perpetuity.

I'd like, in that spirit, to quote for a moment from an American environmentalist, an individual who was born in 1920, Stewart Udall, and his thoughts on reading one of the great environmental tracts that was published about 100 ago, and that was, of course, *Walden Pond* by Henry David Thoreau. The quotation is as follows:

"The most common trait of all primitive peoples is a reverence for the life-giving earth, and the native American shared this elemental ethic: the land was alive to his loving touch, and he, its son, was brother to all creatures. His feelings were made visible in medicine bundles and dance rhythms for rain, and all of his religious rites and land attitudes savoured the inseparable world of nature and God, the master of life. During the long Indian tenure the land remained undefiled save for scars no deeper than the scratches of cornfield clearings or the farming canals of the Hohokams on the Arizona desert."

He goes on by saying, "A land ethic for tomorrow should be as honest as Thoreau's *Walden*, and as comprehensive as the sensitive science of ecology. It should stress the oneness of our resources and the live-and-help-live logic of the great chain of life. If, in our haste to 'progress,' the economics of ecology are disregarded by citizens and policy-makers alike, the result will be an ugly" country.

I take from this the lesson that in our haste to progress, in our haste for urban sprawl, in our haste to continue with the trappings of modern civilization, if we do not make adjustments to that frenetic pace, if we do not make adjustments to all the different aspects, whether it's our roads or our water systems or our waste management systems, then we in Ontario will be the poorer for it.

I mentioned as well that this is not a "one of" act. It is not simply dealing with one particular landfill site, the Adams mine site. It is not simply dealing with one particular waste management project. Actually, it is broadly to prevent the use of lakes as landfill sites. Of course, there are particulars that go with it, be it size and location and precisely what the water characteristics are, but it is a signal from this government, the McGuinty government, that the environment, unlike in the past, particularly in the eight years of the previous regime, which summarily and deliberately dismantled the Ministry of the Environment—as we understand it, the previous government actually ended up firing, dismissing, something in the order of about 30% of the Ministry of the Environment's staff. I think the people of Ontario will never forget some of the entirely avoidable tragedies that occurred because of those rash actions, including the most glaring, the Walkerton water tragedy.

I can say as well, as a biologist or in my physician capacity, that we often talk about the mixture of medications. For example, if a particular individual is taking, within his system alone, two, three, four, five different medications, sometimes health care practitioners are not aware of what the ultimate result will be, are not aware of what the ultimate cocktail, the mixture of medications, will lead to.

Very similarly, when you put 20 million tonnes of solid, apparently non-hazardous waste in a single site

over 20 years, despite all the various precautions that may be taken, there is no telling over time, whether it's seepage, mixtures, groundwater contamination, continued toxification, perhaps even air toxification, air pollution, what might result from this type of project, and this is what will end up happening over the future. As you'll recall, that's part of what we call the law of unintended consequences. It is for that very reason that we in the government are moving not only on this project here, the Adams mine landfill site, but also to prevent the use of lakes as landfill sites broadly across Ontario.

In summary, this is a strengthening of the Environmental Protection Act, all the while maintaining just compensation for the individuals who are involved as owners and proponents of this landfill site. It deals responsibly with waste management, all the while being guided by the underlying vision, the underlying philosophy of the public interest in maintaining our quality of life. In particular, it is a symbolic action, a signal to the people of Ontario that your government values its environment, that your government will act decisively for its protection for now and for future generations.

1620

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): I share my colleague's pleasure of being able to speak to this bill. This bill is to prevent individuals or corporations from taking garbage and putting it into a lake. You have to wonder what someone was thinking some years ago when they said, "Where's a good place to put our garbage, stuff that we don't know anything about? We don't know what's in the trucks. I know; let's put it in a lake." It just boggles my mind that someone would even think about that. I know the argument put forward, "We'll pump the water out of the mine so there won't be water in it." But it would seem to me—this is pretty elementary, I guess—that if water is coming into the mine, then there will be a stage when water will come back in, and if water goes in, water comes back out. I'm just boggled that this bill had to come forward.

I recall that in the previous Legislature there was a strong sense that the previous government wanted to put garbage into a lake. I can relate to that because in the community where I live there is a wonderful lake on the top of the hill called Oak Lake. There was a search going on, probably about 12 years ago, where they were looking to locate a dump, and one of the areas identified was Oak Lake. That certainly drew my interest, as it did all of the community's. I didn't live next to Oak Lake but I had a fair sense that a body of water such as that would affect a lot of people's drinking water. So a large public meeting was called and a large number of us showed up. The question I posed to some of the experts there was, "Where does the water come from that flows into Oak Lake?" The answer was, "We're not sure."

You see, one of the challenges in engineering is that if you're dealing with groundwater, you're dealing with unknown paths, unknown quantities. This is an aside, but I give a great deal of appreciation to the Minister of the Environment for bills dealing with not allowing people to

take any amount of water they want out of the ground, because we have no sense of how much water we have in Ontario. That's being determined now. We had no sense of how much water is actually being given or how much water was there to be used. So here on Oak Lake they didn't know where the water came from. They knew there were outlets in the lake but they didn't know where it went to, and yet it was being seriously considered. One just has to say, what was going through their minds to even consider using a lake as a garbage dump?

So this bill is being produced and it applies, thank goodness, to much more than just Adams Lake, but it applies to lakes and bodies of water in general, recognizing that if we take and pollute our rivers, that's very obvious to us, but when we take and we pollute a lake, we're going to have exactly the same effect on our environment somewhere. In the case of Oak Lake by our house, the experts believe that the water may in fact come literally thousands of miles; and being at the top of the hill, it's spring-fed, so obviously the original source of the lake, whatever is feeding it, is even higher than that. But we don't understand it. I might add as an aside that it's a lake that I have a great deal of respect for. It's a lake that I crossed one day in a snowmobile and learned that the ice was approximately one inch thinner than is necessary to support a snowmobile. So I realize that that's a very special lake and I want to keep it just the way it is, without my snowmobile or me at the bottom.

This is a very fair bill. This is a bill that provides compensation because the company that was proposing it in good faith believed that it was going to be approved. They did not realize how concerned Ontarians were about it. This isn't just a northern Ontario issue; this is an Ontario issue. Waste is an Ontario issue. First of all, I think I can say as Liberals that we were appalled at the concept that we can use northern Ontario to get rid of our garbage. That is certainly not the philosophy of this party. This party is not a GTA party or a southwestern Ontario party or a northern Ontario party; we're an Ontario party and we believe strongly that this is a provincial issue that's to be resolved, and not by putting garbage on railway cars and shipping north to one specific community. So the Adams mine company that was being led on to believe that they could in fact operate this and take the waste from Toronto will be fairly compensated. At the same time, other companies that are considering it in other areas have gotten the very clear message that this is not going to be tolerated in Ontario.

There are good exemptions in it that apply to where there's going to be solid material. Perhaps there's going to be blast rock or something put into a lake that will have no effect on the water. It's the quality of water that we're concerned about.

At the same time, as part of this bill it stops what was going to be a land giveaway by the former government for the land that surrounded the Adams mine—literally a land giveaway to enable a private firm to create a great deal of money while leaving a legacy of potentially polluted water.

Now, we know that with garbage dumps, while there's a great deal of control on them, there is always concern that there will be leaking out of the liner. Here in Adams mine, there would have been very little doubt that it would have influenced the groundwater.

If all that the minister did was stop the garbage going into our bodies of water, that would be a good bill. That alone would make this a good bill. But we're seeing much more going on in Ontario that works along with this to recognize the fact that although the one issue is not polluting the water in the mine, the other issue is that we have to come to grips with pollution in general, and with our garbage and waste disposal in Ontario.

If you want to get some sense of how much garbage we produce, we were in a store that is open 24 hours a day, and we happened to be there at about 2 in the morning when the aisles were just packed with boxes being unpacked and merchandise being put on the shelves. Very clearly, all of those boxes of items that were being opened, being put on the shelf, were replacing items that had been sold the previous day, because they do this every night. Every night they restock the shelves. That's waste with the packaging, with the cardboard boxes, with the items that will be taken home and used and ultimately disposed of.

The amount of garbage we produce is fantastic. It is easy to say, "Well, I don't produce garbage in my little community, so I really have no ownership in it." But when each of us purchases an automobile, somewhere where that automobile was produced, or where the components were produced, there was waste produced at the same time that we have responsibility for, we collectively have responsibility for, and we need to ensure that it's being dealt with properly.

Recycling started off great in this province. I think, if we look at pre-1990, we saw some great initiatives come out. That was the David Peterson government, I believe, prior to 1990, who came out with the recycling initiatives that accepted that, at first glance, it may not be economical to recycle. You can look at a specific product and say, "After it's collected, it's sold for less money than it cost to collect it," but that doesn't grasp the total picture. That doesn't recognize that by taking that item, not putting it into the waste stream, first of all, there's money saved and our environment's protected. I don't know what dollar you put on it, but that's certainly something that is highly significant to all of us, if it protects our groundwater and protects our land.

It also prevents other materials, if we're dealing with plastics, for example, that are made out of oil—we know the cost of oil, we know that it is not absolutely unlimited, and so the recycling offsets using new material. In general, you can take something such as plastic and recycle it using less energy than you initially used to produce it. So the recycling will produce that additional savings of lower energy costs. That's of concern to everyone in Ontario.

Also, from an engineering viewpoint, recycled material can often be much purer and cleaner than the

original material. The original material has been produced and they've got all of the pollutants and contaminants out of it, but in effect it gets a second run through the system, a second run through the filters. And so recycled material can be of a superior quality in most or in many cases to the original product. So we have to look beyond just what it costs us to pick up the blue boxes and take them to recycling. We have to capture the entire picture. Recycling very clearly has significant savings when you look at the total picture.

On the other hand, there is too often a belief that if we take and bury something, we can forget about it. They can put garbage somewhere in a hole in the ground, or do a landfill and cover it up, and it's gone. And we even have this idea—it's a wrong idea, often—that if we take and bury it, it all rots and it kind of turns to soil and it's actually not bad stuff. What happens when we bury our garbage is quite the opposite, folks.

1630

There's a landfill in my community, in what was formerly Sidney township. They took out some of the material that had been buried for 15 to 20 years. These green garbage bags are not just handy for us to put garbage in, which we view as a convenience. They also effectively prevent oxygen getting at anything inside of them. We opened up green garbage bags with newspapers in there that were 20 years old and we could read them clearly. We think newspapers will rot away quickly. They don't. The materials within the garbage bags tend to stay, except for the liquid portion. The liquid portions will leak out and make a cocktail that will destroy the water system in that community for generations and generations to come.

See, when the garbage truck stops at your driveway or lane and picks up the green bags, they don't know what is in it. It then gets taken and mixed with other green bags and other liquids. Chemicals are formed that create a cocktail, and we simply cannot in any way, shape or form predict what it will be. So taking it and burying it is not the right answer.

This government's decision that it will require 60% of our waste stream to be diverted to recycling is good for this generation, the next generation and every generation to come. It's the responsible thing to do, and it is attainable. It is not a number plucked out of the air. It is a number that will go a long way to address health costs, which are an issue, and to address our very survival and our flourishing as the best country in the world in which to live.

I applaud the minister for the Adams mine bill and for the associated legislation that will improve the situation in Ontario for all our future generations.

Mr John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex): I am pleased to join in the debate, following the Minister of the Environment and also the members from Brampton Centre, Etobicoke North and Prince Edward-Hastings.

The Lakota are an aboriginal people, a First Nation in this continent, and they have a wonderful saying that has been passed down from generation to generation: "We do

not inherit the environment from our grandparents, but rather we borrow it from our grandchildren." I think this bill, Bill 49, speaks to the essence of that wisdom that has been handed down to us.

Today is the first day that I rise in this House in my new capacity as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of the Environment, and I would like to start my comments by paying tribute to my predecessor. As you know, our friend and colleague, a friend of everyone in the House, the good member from Hamilton East, Dominic Agostino, passed away in March, tragically. It was a tremendous blow to this House, and I can tell you that it was a tremendous blow to the Liberal family that makes up part of this House. So it is an honour to have been asked by the Premier to take up the mantle that was so ably conducted by Dom in this House.

I'd like to say as well that I enjoy working with the minister. I have known the minister personally for many, many years. We went to the same high school. The minister will know that the good Sisters of Providence at Nicholson Catholic College in Belleville would be proud of us, that we are both here today in this Legislature. As Ms Mossop said, they were halcyon days when we were there. We were instilled, the two of us, and all our families—the minister's family from Tweed and my family from Trenton—with the need to serve, to serve our community. It wasn't enough just to take from our community; it was important that we give back, because much had been given to us in our generation and we owed an obligation back. In a sense, it fits in with my first comments, that we don't inherit the environment from our grandparents, that we are just borrowing it from our grandchildren.

The other thing I'd like to say, of course, is that I have appreciated the welcome I have received from my new colleagues at the Ministry of the Environment. Speaking from a historical point of view, the Ministry of the Environment really is an amazing ministry. It is a regulatory ministry. Like other parts of the government, it is a first line of defence. It is the will of the people expressed through legislation saying that some things must be protected and the government, as an expression of the will of the people, needs to pay attention to those things.

Our party has a tremendous legacy of environmental activism, and I speak of course to the dean of this Legislature, the Honourable Jim Bradley, who is now the Minister of Tourism and Recreation. During the Liberal administration between 1985 and 1990 he was really revolutionary, a leading proponent of changing this province to one where we would believe in and start to act on a sustainable future, where we would actually start caring more about our grandchildren than our pocket-books. So we have a high standard to meet.

It's tragic, because after Mr Bradley there were two other governments. I can speak specifically financially to the previous government, which made a decision—and they were duly elected to do so—to reduce the resources to the Ministry of the Environment, to reduce the number of people who worked at the Ministry of the Envi-

ronment. I think history has taught us all that when we turn our backs on the environment, the environment will come back and bite us, that it is not something we're allowed to turn our back on.

I'm happy to say that now it is a priority of our government. I think the greatest example of that is the budget: Just follow the money. I'm proud to say that in our budget we increased the funding to the Ministry of the Environment. In regard to their operating budget this year over last, they see an increase from \$260 million to \$304 million, and the capital budget of the ministry has gone from \$4 million to \$13 million—this in an environment where we are stretched to meet our fundamental requirements in regard to public education and public health. Despite the fact that we've had to make tough decisions, our priorities are outlined by where we allocate our fiscal resources.

Bill 49 is a first step. It isn't the be-all and end-all. It is just the first step of our government in regard to the environment. We have to reduce waste. That's why the minister has set a very ambitious target for the whole province to reduce waste by 60%. It is something we can do but it takes leadership and resources, something that our government is committed to. As well, we need to reform the environmental assessment process. We need to be able to solve local problems locally. Really, at the heart of the waste issue there is the question of, can we get somebody else to take our waste? Can we be not responsible for what we have done, what we have created, and try to shove it off to somebody else?

Whether it is in Michigan or going up a smokestack or being buried in an unsafe way, it's only natural, I suppose, for humans to take these things and try to find some other place to put them. But again, that defeats the wisdom of the ages we have received, because really we are just borrowing our environment from our grandchildren. These sins that we would perpetrate today will come back to haunt our grandchildren. We'll be long gone, our grandparents will be long gone—it's our grandchildren who have to deal with these issues. So the very thought that we would take millions and millions of tonnes of garbage, supposedly non-hazardous, and dump it in what everyone would agree, if it isn't a lake, is going to be a lake—that's what an open-pit mine is. Where you have a pit that goes below the aquifer, it's going to fill up with water. So I think this is the type of stuff we are looking toward as a first step to try to get our province back on a sustainable footing.

I would like to express my appreciation to the NDP for supporting this bill. They have been very constructive in committee. We have amendments that have come forward on the bill. Personally, I want to say that it was a great example of how it is possible in this place for parties to look for common ground to forward an initiative that we all agree on. But you know—

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): You give us so few opportunities.

Mr Wilkinson: I know we do but we're starting to work closer together. We'll leave it up to our federal cousins, perhaps, to have to work closer together.

I would like to speak on the position expressed by the official opposition in this House. I had a chance to review Hansard and what the other members from the official opposition, particularly the members from Nepean-Carleton and Whitby-Ajax—I read their critique of this bill with great concern. There are two things. One is property rights, and I think the member from Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant—I remember reading about this as well—stated that these property rights are being abrogated, and, as well, lost profits.

1640

Let's deal with the question of property rights. I remember when we were in committee in Windsor. I am not a member of the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly, but it just so happened that I was asked to help out that day. It was on June 3, actually, and there was a question that came up about property rights in the opposition. I left it to my good friend the member from Peterborough. Mr Leal, the member from Peterborough, is a great student of history. He remembers being in this place many years ago as a younger man. He enjoyed his time here and has ended up back in this place.

There was a question for a Mr FitzPatrick, who was a lawyer representing the Attorney General.

"The question of property rights"—this is Mr Leal's opinion—"is a bit of a red herring from my perspective. If you go back to the Constitution of 1982, when the Prime Minister of the day put property rights on the table, it was rejected principally by three Premiers—Sterling Lyon of Manitoba, Mr Davis of Ontario and Mr Lougheed of Alberta"—I might add, all Progressive Conservatives—"because they were concerned that if property rights were enshrined in the Constitution, provincial governments would never be able to expropriate for highways or hydro corridors, or municipalities wouldn't be able to get any roads.

"I am asking you as a lawyer"—this is Mr Leal asking the lawyer from the Attorney General—"to address this red herring that keeps getting thrown out" by the opposition. "Ask Mr McMurtry, who was the AG of the day for Ontario and helped to craft the Constitution. Trudeau," the Prime Minister, "put property rights on the table, and the Premier said, 'Get property rights off the table,' because of expropriation, for roads and hydro corridors and other things."

Mr FitzPatrick said, "I agree with what you said. It is my understanding that in the field of property and civil rights, provincial governments are empowered to do whatever they wish to do."

So there is no great protection of property rights as espoused by the opposition. There could have been property rights under the Constitution, but they were flatly rejected, particularly by Mr Davis and Mr McMurtry. I find it somewhat odd now that some people are great proponents of property rights. We are living north of the border, not south of it.

The other issue is one of lost profits. I am a businessman, a certified financial planner. We are saying to the proponent that we will give you fair compensation for

the money you put into this project. I am absolutely dead set against the concept that we would somehow come up with some idea of what the profits would have been and write a cheque from the good taxpayers of Ontario to the proponent of this proposition. I am a businessman. You take a risk. You win or you lose. There is no safety net in business. I think that we are being eminently fair to the proponent. It's a difficult decision, I agree. But the idea that somehow we should set a precedent in this House that we should be compensating people for lost profits is wrong. It is not, in my opinion, what this Legislature is all about.

I also want to talk about the three amendments. I think it is one of the strengths of the government that has been formed since, really, early November by our party that instead of rejecting going out to committee, instead of not listening to people, we have been taking our bills out to people to hear what they have to say. It is that type of reaction, that type of feedback from the good people of Ontario, that helps us to improve our bills.

A good example is Bill 8: substantially improved, in my opinion, because of the work that we did in committee. I believe that this bill is one as well. The first thing we did for the proponent is we specifically talked about one corporation that he owned, but actually, historically, there were two corporations. So we've acknowledged that in the bill and made the amendments. I commend the minister for doing that.

There was a kind of accounting question about expenses incurred but not yet paid prior to the first reading of Bill 49, which is a key date, when the minister got up in the House. Again, I think we've accommodated that reasonable request.

Also, for greater clarity in the second set of amendments, we changed the order of the bill so that it was easier for people to understand.

Then we had to deal with a great issue. I'm glad it was brought up in committee, because it had to do with the fact that we do have existing landfill sites, and they do have water on those sites. They, for example, may have an overflow lagoon, which is environmentally important to have. So we wanted to make sure we were very specific about those landfill sites, and that there was greater clarity in the bill. I commend the minister for doing that.

I've always been remarkably impressed with the work of Robert F. Kennedy Jr. I remember a speech that he gave, and it resonated with me because my wife's family is from the minister's riding, from the great town of Marmora, where there is also an open iron ore pit, and that, sir, is becoming a lake. That's what God does. When you dig a great big hole and you go through the aquifer and you leave it alone and don't pump the water out, it fills up.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr said that putting garbage in an abandoned mine, which really is just a lake that hasn't filled up yet, is the equivalent of taking garbage out on a scow, going out to the middle of the lake and sinking it there. No one in this province would allow us to do that. It wouldn't have made any sense whatsoever, but that's

the equivalent of what we're doing. I think we shared a concern with the third party that there was no way that this thing was going to be safe over the next hundred years with millions of tonnes of garbage in there leaching into the aquifer at the headwaters of the Great Lakes. That would be a bad idea. So I'm proud to support the bill.

Just to sum up, as I've said, the government of the day has decided to take a new tack with the environment. We are rejecting what has happened before us and are trying to go back where we're putting the resources, the commitment, the political will to make sure that our grandchildren will be proud of what we do in this place. And what are we doing here if we are not making our grandchildren proud? Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant):

During this past hour's debate on Bill 49, our Minister of the Environment made mention of improving diversion, the diversion of organics and institutional waste, and talked of further consultations. It is regrettable that this piece of proposed legislation—it does make mention of disposal of waste, but there's no mention of recycling or waste diversion, diversion of organics or institutional waste.

The garbage strike in Toronto in 2002 has certainly served as a wake-up call to people that something needs to be done about trash, including food scraps and other organics, and I think it's unfortunate that this isn't addressed in the legislation itself. Ontario households, going beyond Toronto, produce about four million tonnes of garbage every year. Much of that is organics, food scraps, yard waste. In 1999, Ontarians composted only about 24% of the 1.6 million tonnes of organic waste that they produced. Certainly backyard composters is an idea whose time has come and gone and has come again.

With respect to the institutional production of organics—and this goes back maybe 30 years ago when I was teaching high school. I taught environmental science. Our project was we took all of the food scraps, all the organic waste from a high school of 1,000 students. Every day, a student would go up. We composted it behind the greenhouse and in the springtime, people in the town of Simcoe could come and pick up beautiful bushel baskets of tilth for their gardens. Thank you.

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): As a northerner, I can tell you that I've always been opposed to this particular project. I was when I was Minister of Northern Development, when Notre Development first came to see us to see if we would be supportive. I was not interested then and have never been interested since in seeing Ontario used as a dumping ground for somebody else's waste and somebody else's garbage. It might give some comfort to some people when it's out of sight and out of mind, but it certainly doesn't deal with the much broader and more serious issue of how we deal with waste diversion, how we deal with recycling, etc. Just dumping it somewhere to get it out of your sight and out of your mind doesn't resolve the problem that I hope this government is now going to tackle with respect to recycling, etc.

But you know, we got through this one, and now before us is a proposal by essentially a federal organization to deal with nuclear waste. Here we go again with a proposal that might again make Ontario a dumping ground, this time for nuclear waste. The Nuclear Waste Management Organization, which was created by the federal government in 2002, has been looking at long-term storage options for nuclear waste somewhere in Canada. One of three options includes a permanent, deep geological repository in underground caverns in the Canadian Shield, which would be in our special part of the province. I want to say categorically today, as a northerner, as a member who represents the northeast, I am absolutely opposed to any proposal by this organization and by the federal government, who would actually make the final decision, to use northern Ontario as a dumping ground.

I think it's time now for this Liberal government to send a very similar strong message to the federal government that under no circumstances will this government let the federal government and Atomic Energy transport all of this kind of waste to be stored somewhere underground in the Canadian Shield. I hope that is the message this government is now going to send to the federal government.

1650

Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I have certainly enjoyed the very positive comments from the Minister of the Environment, Ms Dombrowsky, and other members of the caucus on this issue. I did have the opportunity to sit in on hearings in Milton in May and hear first-hand why Bill 49 is so important in terms of putting waste in the Adams landfill site, but beyond that, I have some experience in the area. During my 18 years in municipal politics in Peterborough, 13 of those I spent as a member of the Peterborough county-city waste management steering committee. We spent about \$6 million during those 13 years to get an expansion of our landfill site in Peterborough.

Safe to say, I find landfilling a very archaic process and a process that needs to come to a conclusion, hopefully, in this province in the near future. By putting Bill 49 in place, I think it is a start to looking at alternatives across this province to deal first-hand with the whole issue of waste management.

The minister has spoken eloquently on the need to look at the total removal of organics from our waste stream. The parliamentary assistant to the minister, my friend from Perth-Middlesex, touched in his remarks today on the need to move this envelope forward as quickly as possible to find serious alternatives. There is no question in my mind that this is the start.

When you look at landfilling in other parts of Ontario, what ultimately is always selected is prime agricultural land because one of the needs for a landfill site is clay, to have that natural barrier to help contain leachate. I think it is an important step that we start to move forward. I think this bill is the catalyst to move this file forward.

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I am pleased to make a few comments on the leadoff of the govern-

ment on the third reading of Bill 49. I guess my problem with Bill 49 is that I have had people from my constituency ask of the Minister of the Environment the technical reasons why you closed this particular approval. This was an approved site. I'd like to get a letter from the minister or from the Ministry of the Environment on all of the technical reasons used to change the approval of this application, because you are not doing it in other parts of the province. You are simply not doing this. You are ignoring other parts of the province.

Property rights are going to be spoken to by Mr Sterling in a few minutes. He will be mentioning that in his comments. I think that you, the Ministry of the Environment, the minister and his staff, owe to the citizens of the province of Ontario the technical reasons why you have turned down and completely reversed this approval. I'd like to see that and that's why I'm asking right now for this to be put on the record. If you have them, you can submit them.

Interjection.

Mr Dunlop: Absolutely. That's all I am saying. You can sit over there and heckle all you want, but until you provide the technical reasons why you've turned this down, I will never support this bill. And I can't understand why anybody in their right mind would support this bill. There are technical reasons for this and we need to see them. The citizens of Ontario deserve to see the technical reasons why this application has been completely turned down. It's pork-barrelling. That's all it is, and you all know that over there. That's all this is about. It's pork-barrelling.

Minister Ramsay threatened to resign. You know it. That's why you've turned it down, and all of a sudden you won't submit the technical reasons. If not, submit them to us. We'd love to see that information. You wouldn't do it at the hearings and you wouldn't do it at any other time in the House. I'm asking you to do it today.

The Acting Speaker: One of the government members has two minutes to reply.

Hon Mrs Dombrowsky: First of all, I'd like to thank all the members of the Legislature who participated: the members from Brampton Centre, Etobicoke North, Prince Edward-Hastings, Perth-Middlesex, Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant, Nickel Belt, Peterborough and Simcoe North. All the comments I believe enriched the debate on this very important bill.

I think it's important, as Minister of the Environment, to highlight that the chief goal of this bill is to protect the environment in the Adams mine lake community. I believe a number of members here today spoke very appropriately about the potential risk. This government has not been convinced that the proposed hydraulic containment proposal that was approved would not have a negative impact on the local environment.

Since the time approvals were granted for this initiative, there has been a lot happen in the history of this province. We've had Walkerton. I think that was a very important event and we have to take some lessons from

that. We have to understand that protecting our water resources has to be primary. I would suggest that if this government is making any statement to the people of Ontario, it is that protecting our water resources is primary.

We will do whatever we believe we must do to ensure for people in communities across Ontario that their water resource are protected, and we're not going to make any apologies for that. We are absolutely convinced that we have a responsibility to exercise due diligence on that very fundamentally important issue for every community in Ontario. I'm very proud of this legislation and very proud of what it will achieve for people in our communities across the province.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Barrett: I look forward to addressing Bill 49. I'll be sharing my time with the members from Simcoe North and Lanark-Carleton. Congratulations to the member for Perth-Middlesex on his appointment as PA to environment.

We're debating a bill curiously titled the Adams Mine Lake Act. As we heard earlier, our Legislative Assembly committee travelled two days and heard from a number of delegations interested in commenting on the legislation that, in our view, leaves the province of Ontario with absolutely no plan for the future of garbage currently being trucked across the border to Michigan.

On this side of the House, we've been hearing from, and speaking to, elected representatives from Michigan who are pushing for this province to develop made-in-Ontario solutions to Metro's garbage problem. We've heard from mayors along the trash route who are very concerned, and we've certainly been chatting with, and have heard in committee from, Ontario regional chairs who are concerned their backyards will be targeted for new landfills. I have to say that I am now even more concerned about the real potential impact this legislation will have for communities and regions across our province.

People are nervous. They know that if the Adams Mine Lake Act is passed, it will remove from the table the only potential solution to the current ticking trash bomb travelling across our highways into Michigan, travelling at the rate of 125 tractor-trailer loads of garbage a day.

The moment Michigan elected officials take their initiative aimed at protecting the state from imported garbage headaches to their logical conclusion and close the border to Toronto's trash convoy, we in Ontario will be knee-deep in a waste problem that will only grow larger each day this government sits on its hands without a backup plan. We need a plan to remedy this potential situation.

1700

Now is not the time to be taking options off the table, especially when we have no other options on the table. Now is not the time, because I can tell you, over in Michigan, elected representatives are taking action, even as we speak, to protect their state from foreign trash. As

early as tomorrow, Wednesday, June 16, the Michigan House of Representatives will be debating a resolution that was introduced by a friend of the committee, Republican representative Daniel Acciavatti. It's aimed at having this province deal with its own garbage disposal issues.

We were in touch with Mr Acciavatti's office about half an hour ago. The resolution has already been introduced. It goes to committee tomorrow and then second and third readings. His office feels it will be passed next week.

I'd like to read some of basics from this resolution. It's entitled, "A resolution to urge the Ontario Minister of the Environment to establish additional landfills and facilitate approval of pending landfill expansions."

I further read:

"Whereas, for many years, Michigan and other states and provinces have wrestled with finding the best strategies to manage solid waste to protect the environment and achieve the highest standards of health and safety. This formidable task has been made more challenging by court decisions impacting Michigan solid waste policy as they defined the limits of federal, state and constitutional authority; and

"Whereas, Michigan has been especially frustrated by increasing volumes of imported trash. Fully one fourth of trash deposited in Michigan landfills originates outside the state. While issues of commerce, authority, and, more recently, security enter the discussions about imported trash across our international border, it is essential that long-term environmental concerns remain at the heart of this debate; and

"Whereas, in an effort to protect our waters, communities and land, Michigan is in the process of establishing tougher standards of solid waste management. In doing so, our state is taking strong steps to reduce significantly the volume of materials that take up landfill space and strengthen standards designed to protect the environment; and

"Whereas, our neighbours in Ontario are facing declining landfill capacity because of impediments to obtaining timely approval for projects subject to Ontario....

"Resolved by the House of Representatives, that we urge the Ontario Minister of the Environment to complete reform of the environmental review process to enable qualified solid waste processing projects to move forward and facilitate approval of pending landfill expansions in Ontario."

Representative Acciavatti's resolution points to the need for Ontario to deal with our garbage within our borders through creation of new landfills and landfill expansions. I wonder if the minister has been able to assure Mr Acciavatti that landfill space will be available and where that space will be located. All of Ontario is really anxious to know just where the minister plans to create a new home for Toronto's garbage.

That's latest from the Michigan Legislature. I will say it builds on a series of bills aimed at reducing the impact

of waste emigrating across the US border from the GTA. As was mentioned earlier during testimony in front of our Legislative Assembly committee, Mr Acciavatti gave members insight into further actions being taken and concerns being raised over the importation of garbage.

He pointed out, "On the security side, in the global world we live in, Candice Miller was instrumental in bringing Tom Ridge to the Blue Water Bridge area." I know Representative Acciavatti represents an area south of the Blue Water Bridge. "I think he went on both sides of the bridge and looked at that crossing from a homeland security standpoint. The homeland security issue is a concern. In the global world we live in, there's a real possibility that we could end up at an orange or red homeland security level, which would affect those border crossings. So that definitely brings into conversation a whole different part of it."

Mr Acciavatti further pointed to concerns about invasive species, especially given Michigan's current problems with the emerald ash borer. This has eliminated pretty well every ash tree in the city of Detroit and has migrated to the southwestern part of Ontario. He made mention of Toronto's difficulties with the Asian long-horned beetle. In questioning his testimony, I pointed out the Michigan data, that fully 25% of the Toronto trash that goes to that landfill south of Detroit, in Sumpter township, is yard waste.

The representative had this to say:

"Yard waste is not allowed in our landfills, so that is going to pose a problem. That's one of the prohibited items, along with bottles and cans. We have a very expansive recycling bill that we use.

"As for the emerald ash borer, it devastated the ash tree population in my district and right across the river in Macomb, Oakland, Wayne and St Clair counties. It's a tremendous problem. Any other invasive species that could potentially get into our country or into your country from our country is something that is a concern and would pose a risk to our public, our health and our safety, which wouldn't help with all this and would be a concern of mine."

Mr Acciavatti's comments underline concerns being raised across the state of Michigan, and his resolution, which I have just read into the record, is just the latest from the Michigan Legislature. It builds on quite a lengthy series of state of Michigan bills aimed at reducing the impact of this waste. To give you a better idea of the bigger picture that's forming on the other side of the border, I would like to highlight some of the state government action in the last couple of months alone.

On March 26, Michigan Governor Jennifer Granholm signed into law a package of legislation that consisted of 11 separate bills that deal with the protection of Michigan from out-of-state garbage in one way or another. I'd like to share some of these bills.

For example, House Bill 5234, sponsored by representative Daniel Acciavatti, regulates the disposal of solid waste in landfills. House Bill 5325, sponsored by state rep David Robertson, requires host community agreements for solid waste disposal.

Michigan Senate Bill 57, sponsored by Senator Mike Bishop, requires inspection of solid waste imported from Canada to determine if waste is being transported under state rules and if that waste poses no threat to the public's health and safety.

Senate Bill 497, sponsored by Senator Buzz Thomas, provides a definition of "beverage container" under the solid waste management law. Senate Bill 498, sponsored by Senator Patty Birkholz, expands prohibited products in landfills to include beverage containers, whole tires, oil, lead acid batteries, low-level radioactive waste and hazardous waste. Senate Bill 499, sponsored Senator Alan Sanborn, enhances inspections of landfills. Senate Bill 500, sponsored by Senator Dennis Olshove, provides increased remedies for violations of enforcement of solid waste laws.

It continues, and I go on. Senate Bill 502 specifically provides regulations for importing solid waste. This was brought forward by Senator Nancy Cassis. Senate Bill 506, sponsored by Senator Bruce Patterson, prohibits out-of-state or out-of-country waste unless prohibited waste has been removed or the other state or province has solid waste stream standards as stringent as Michigan's.

There is more legislation. There is quite a slew here. Senate Bill 557, sponsored by Senator Liz Brater, provides for the Department of Environmental Quality to issue landfill construction permits based on capacity needs.

Senate Bill 715 provides for county and municipal enforcement of solid waste. This one is sponsored by Senator Jud Gilbert.

1710

As well, on the day Governor Granholm signed this bipartisan package of legislation into law, she pointed out, "Today we take a critical step in putting a lid on Michigan's unwanted reputation as the country's trash can." That's pretty serious language. Elected officials in Michigan are very serious about protecting their state from the impact of out-of-state trash.

This legislation is part and parcel with a series of petitions that have been circulating throughout the Great Lakes state. There's one from Michigan Senator Debbie Stabenow, in which she urges constituents to "Join The Fight To Stop Canadian Trash Now!"

Senator Stabenow has already presented petitions signed by 165,627 people to the EPA, urging enforcement of a 1986 treaty that gives the EPA authority to stop these shipments immediately. As she mentions—this is on her Web site, for anyone who cares to look this up—"But the fight continues."

The threat of Michigan turning back the 125 tractor-trailers that approach the US border every day is a very real and immediate concern, when I read into the record well over a dozen separate state Legislature bills, most of which have been passed. This could have all of us scrambling for answers once the full potential of this Michigan legislation that's moving along, actually in a parallel way to the Ontario government legislation we're debating today.

The battle lines are being drawn. This has been mentioned in the House before. There may be people here amenable to seeing John Kerry become the next President of the United States. Democratic candidate Kerry is very clear on where he stands with respect to out-of-state garbage. Here's a quote from Mr Kerry to a journalist: "We shouldn't import trash from other countries." It's that simple. That's coming from a possible future President. He further promised—this would be a Democratic promise—"to review this issue in the first 120 days of my presidency." That's from a possible future President of the United States.

It goes further to underline the need to be ready with a plan for Toronto's million-plus tonnes of trash that could well be turned back by the state of Michigan or the United States.

Again, I ask the question many nervous people in Ontario are beginning to ask themselves, their MPPs, their municipal councillors: Where is the garbage going to go? What is the plan? What municipalities will have to bear the brunt of Toronto's trash trucks?

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): That's why the advisory group is going to work so well.

Mr Barrett: I'll respond to the member across the way. This garbage has to go somewhere. I certainly hope this comes up at the advisory committee. Perhaps the advisory committee on diversion would be well advised to broaden their mandate to take a look, as Premier McGuinty has indicated, at the need for new landfill and expanded landfill. It's got to go somewhere.

This government seems content to close down an option. The so-called Adams Mine Lake Act shuts down a viable option, in our view. It shuts down 15 years of work, 15 years of debate and 15 years of due diligence, and closes down one of the few options left.

We've heard that Keele Valley will not be reopened. We heard that from the present government. As I've mentioned before, we realize we're seeing here a Liberal approach to governing, an approach of NIMBYism, not-in-my-backyard-ism. In my view, this rules out 71 Liberal ridings, for example, if the government is going to get political about this.

Interjection.

Mr Barrett: Someone mentioned my riding; my colleague's riding—he makes mention of it a lot.

Again, perhaps politically, 71 other ridings are ruled out for landfill or for any expansion of landfill. We saw that come to fruition with our Minister of the Environment. Steps were taken to rule out expansion of landfill in her riding. So where do we go? I will say that rural Ontario is certainly becoming more and more concerned about this.

In the first hour of debate, mention was made of the testimony, the public hearings, before the Legislative Assembly committee in Milton. We visited Milton after our visit down to Windsor. Joyce Savoline, chairperson for Halton region, spoke about "fairness, procedure, precedents, responsibility and accountability." During her

presentation, chairperson Savoline said that the current decision on the Adams mine would negatively impact her constituents, considering the fact that there are currently no other options available when it comes to waste disposal.

That region, members opposite may recall, underwent its own trash crisis roughly 12 years ago. What did the region do? They rolled up their sleeves, Halton region got to work, and the result was a forward-thinking solution through taxes. The residents of Halton paid for a landfill site. It cost well in excess of \$100 million. Prior to that landfill site project, Halton found itself in the business of exporting garbage. "When we shopped around for interim capacity, all doors were closed to us," Ms Savoline told our committee. "We even suggested reciprocal agreements. We would, at a future date, receive the same amount of garbage from another municipality that would take ours in the interim, and we were told unequivocally, 'No, thank you.'" That's the climate we are operating in in Ontario.

That was in the mid-1980s. Ontario's trash problem has grown by leaps and bounds since then, and Ms Savoline said that she certainly wouldn't like to revisit the days of finding a home for garbage even though the issue has worked out for Halton. However, the chair is very clear that Halton, for one, does not want to be one of the province's dump sites for Toronto's trash.

Mr McMeekin: So what does she want to do?

Mr Barrett: I'll read on. She is worried about a crisis. Very clearly, she is worried about a Michigan crisis.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant has the floor.

Mr Barrett: The members opposite are putting this on the Chair's shoulders.

They spent the money. They spent \$100 million. Halton has thought into the future. They have a 40-year capacity for refuse. That life capacity would be reduced to something like two years in the event that Toronto's trash needed a short-term, perhaps long-term, home.

"We can all agree that the issue of not finding a long-term waste disposal solution quickly really is a crisis in the making." That's what the chair told our committee. She continued, saying, "We know that continuing to export our garbage to Michigan is not a sustainable option. Artificial cost is narrowing the gap between that exporting venue and disposing of our waste in our own communities. So where it costs much less to ship garbage to Michigan than to look after it here, that gap is closing because of all kinds of things like gas prices," for example, "and new rules for drivers who drive those trucks."

1720

The Liberal government opposite doesn't quite understand this concern for an alternate plan. Nobody even knows if this government is working on a plan, and the fear is that they may try and take the easy way out and dump Toronto's trash on a region like Halton. That's certainly the concern in that particular region. The people

of Halton have worked toward an outstanding diversion rate of 42%. Would it be fair to these people, who understand the importance of diversion and have worked so hard, to penalize them some day by forcing Toronto's trash on them? Halton region should be rewarded, actually; they should not be punished. Yet this government cannot assure Ms Savoline and her constituents that they won't receive Toronto's trash. That's unnerving at best.

Similarly Roger Anderson, chair of Durham region—we contacted his office yesterday—indicated to us, "It's a shame to take any viable and feasible site off the table right now." Chair Anderson certainly shares our fear of what will happen if Michigan decides to close the border. A decision at this point in time, in Mr Anderson's words, is premature for this legislation to go forward.

Furthermore, Mr Anderson finds it particularly disturbing that this government would come in and make such a decision on the Adams mine when not one council—and he's referring to the New Liskeard municipal councils—but two elected municipal councils were pro-Adams mine. So Mr Anderson as well wants to know where the government's back-up plan is. Can you reassure people like Mr Anderson that you have a site for Toronto's trash if Michigan decides to say, "Game over"?

I'd like to introduce some additional thoughts concerning the issue of the road transport, the 125 tractor-trailers that are barrelling down the border. Four years ago, Sarnia Mayor Mike Bradley: "There are already too many trucks on the road and if this garbage has to be transported, it should be done by rail." Mayor Anne Marie DeCicco, of the city of London, has a similar view, expanding on the fact that if truck traffic increases, the safety issue magnifies. Both DeCicco and Bradley belong to what's referred to as the Southwestern Ontario Trash Coalition, along with representatives from Windsor, Essex county, Kitchener and Cambridge. It's a coalition whose stated goal is to force Toronto to deal with its own trash dilemma.

Again, these mayors worry that they could be dumped on if this government and the city of Toronto do not devise a plan. Mayor Bradley, for one, is on record as saying that dumping Toronto garbage in another municipally owned landfill is "a direct robbery of tax dollars." I agree with that one.

On May 10, Ian Urquhart of the Toronto Star posed a question, "What happens if the border is closed? It is a nightmare scenario that the provincial government would rather not contemplate." Urquhart continues later in his editorial, "We should be very worried, then, about a prospect of the border being closed to our garbage and we should be working on a contingency plan." He also pointed out that it was this Liberal government's environment minister who, at the beginning of May, told the Recycling Council of Ontario, "The provincial government is not taking over waste management in Ontario. Waste management, and waste diversion, is the responsibility of municipalities." Mr Urquhart questions this, as we do on this side of the House.

If landfills and waste diversion are municipal responsibilities, why have Premier McGuinty and Minister Dombrowsky pulled the option of sending trash to the Adams mine? Why was the Kirkland Lake option taken off the table? That question remains unanswered. There are no technical reasons given for that decision. Actually, their position remains unclear on this one. The question remains, is garbage the responsibility of municipalities or is garbage the responsibility of the provincial government? So far, as Mr Urquhart indicated, all Minister Dombrowsky seems to be touting is her goal of recycling 60% of Ontario's garbage by 2008, and I sincerely hope we reach that goal. It's putting quite an onus on homeowners, especially when their provincial government seems to be neglecting the issue. I've said in the past that 60% diversion in four years is an admirable goal, but there is another side to this. Last December, in questioning in the House, Minister Dombrowsky told me we would have 60% diversion by next year. As they say, that was then and this is now.

With respect to diversion, I sincerely hope this is explored in detail in the announced consultations. Sixty per cent diversion is a laudable goal. The question remains, where does the other 40% go? Where is the plan for landfill?

I wish to wrap up my comments; I've been summoned to the finance committee. I would turn to my colleagues to continue the debate. There is certainly much more to be discussed with this particular piece of legislation.

Mr Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): It's a pleasure, I guess, in some ways, to speak to Bill 49. I think Bill 49 is perhaps one of the worst pieces of legislation, showing a total lack of understanding about what the Ministry of the Environment is about, what the government should be doing in the environment portfolio and what the future is with regard to this government's plan for the environment ministry.

This bill shows a lack of respect for process. I'm talking about the whole environmental approval process the Adams Mine site went through over a period of eight to 10 years. It shows a lack of respect for science and technology, in terms of the engineering reports, the science reports that were brought to bear during that process, which ultimately proved that this could be used as a safe landfill site. That's what the science said, that's what the engineers said and that's what the environmental appeal tribunal said as well.

Lastly, but more importantly, is a lack of respect for the rule of law in the province of Ontario. Perhaps the most damning indictment of this government is that last one: that is, they did not allow the proponent, the owners of this venture, full access to the courts for compensation, something which is—well, kings have lost their heads for it in the past, before parliaments were fully in control in our democratic system.

I'm not going to argue whether the government wanted this or didn't want that. It's obvious what the government wanted to do. It was essentially for political purposes that this government made the choice that they

were going to pull the rug out from a legitimate businessman in terms of something he and other partners and financiers had put a great deal of energy, time and money into. As well, I believe one of the objectives of a minister, a cabinet and a government is to present opportunities now, and future opportunities should our province be caught in a difficult position.

We've heard from Mr Barrett about the problem with regard to somewhere between 125 and 160 garbage trucks going to Michigan each and every day and not knowing with certainty whether that access to landfill sites is going to continue in the future. I don't know whether that's going to happen, or they don't know whether it's going to happen.

1730

What we have seen from this minister and this Ministry of the Environment is not seeking to find future options to deal with environmental problems, landfills being one of them, but a political answer or political response to everyone who squeaks a little bit about what is going on around them, notwithstanding that the proponent has followed the letter of the law—or the law to the letter, whatever it is—and therefore this is a terrible piece of legislation in that regard.

It shows a total lack of respect for the process. The process to go through for an environmental assessment, to go through for an environmental approval for a landfill site, is an unbelievably arduous, long process. You have to present reports. You have to hire engineers. You have to prove to the Ministry of the Environment, and then they had to prove, in this case, to the appeal tribunal, that in fact the science was on their side.

I sat in the chair of the Ministry of the Environment when the decision from the appeal tribunal came back. Even after they had proved to the appeal tribunal that in fact the science was right, that engineers, skilled scientists and skilled people said it was safe to use this as a landfill site, I asked for a peer review of all of the engineers' reports, so that the officials in the Ministry of the Environment would be satisfied with the decision that was made.

I had independent peers, independent engineers, look at all the work that had been done before. I was Minister of the Environment at that time. I said, "I do not want any kind of questions with regard to the science and technology that is being proposed for the Adams mine." The peer review came back and said that the Ministry of the Environment was right in the first instance, that the appeal tribunal was right in the second instance, and that the science and technology was sound. "You can use this site as a landfill site without contaminating the groundwater and without delay."

Interjections.

Mr Sterling: Some guys over there are saying, "Oh," but you're not saying it from a scientific point of view. You're not an engineer. You're not a scientist.

Interjection.

Mr Sterling: Well, we operate with rules in this province. We operate with a process you have to go through.

Essentially what this government has said to each and every businessman who might want to go forward with a venture, be it a hydro project, be it any kind of plan, be it building a road, be it anything, that businessman has to know that if they come to Ontario, with a Liberal government they're at peril. Even if they cross every "t" and dot every "i," meet every regulation and go through every process, this government can pull the rug from underneath them and say, "You're out of luck, Mr Businessman. Even if you've met all our regulations, we are going to stop your project, and we're not even going to allow you access to the courts to get compensation."

Can you believe that, Mr Speaker? They are not allowing this particular proponent to go to court and receive compensation as the court would deem fit. What they're trying to do in the bill is cut down the ability of this proponent to go to court and get full compensation for the damage that has been done to this proponent.

That is against the rule of law. The rule of law says this: that each and every one of us in this province has to be treated equally and that the government doesn't use its power to make rules against Ted Arnott, Bill Murdoch or any other individual in this province. But that's what this bill does. It singled out a business and said, "We don't like what you're doing, and therefore we're going to restrict your access to the court for full compensation." That's what the bill says. For those who don't believe me, you can read the *Ottawa Citizen* of April 20. Their editorial says, "Dumping the Rule of Law: Ontario's Premier"—who happens to have professed to have studied law—"Shouldn't Need Basic Civics Lessons, But a Bill now Before Queen's Park Demonstrates that Dalton McGuinty Doesn't Understand a Basic Principle of Western Civilization: The Rule of Law."

Anyone who could vote for this piece of legislation hasn't read history, doesn't understand that when you pull the rug from underneath an individual citizen with regard to his or her rights before the courts of Ontario, before the courts of Canada, this government should be very much damned for what they have done.

Interjection.

Mr Sterling: The parliamentary assistant for the Minister of Environment is saying is, "Why weren't property right included in the Constitution?" If we follow his rationale, because it wasn't in the Constitution, we don't have to respect property right in this province. Well, I've got to tell you—

Interjection.

Mr Sterling: That's what you said, sir. That's what Bill 49 says, sir. It says you do not respect property rights, sir, because you will not give this proponent full access to the court to seek his compensation that he is entitled to because he followed all of the rules that the government put in front of him.

It's very, very clear that the Liberal Party does not even want to follow one of the basic elements, principles of western democracy, the rule of law. I say to the pages who are here tonight, you probably will not see a government strip away property rights from another

individual, maybe not during your lifetime, like you've seen in this bill—not so blatant as what has been done here.

Of course, you're now demonstrating another piece of legislation where you're showing a lack of interest in property rights as well: in your Ontario Heritage Act, where you're saying you're giving to another body of government the right to change a designation on a building without compensation with regard to reducing that particular part of it.

Mr McMeekin: We all supported that yesterday. We went home early.

Mr Sterling: No, no, we don't support that bill, sir, with regard to property rights.

I guess the other part of this is, we've heard from the minister that they want a 60% diversion rate. I'd love to have a 60% diversion rate, we'd all like to have a diversion rate, but that's the same old story that I've heard over a long period of time. Whenever there is a landfill problem, the Minister of Environment comes forward—

Interjections.

Mr Sterling: Listen, you guys set up the waste management authority, OK? We didn't get out of the waste management authority anything but a \$20-million bill, and no landfill sites. Don Chant—we set him up and you continued on with this boondoggle going forward.

Every time people talk about getting rid of garbage, they come up with this diversion argument. You hold out—and I would suspect falsely; I hope it's not false, because I would love to have a diversion rate of even higher than 60%. But when a minister comes out and says, "I'm going to have a diversion rate of 60%," but she has no plans how to get there, how to implement it, and she puts out a policy paper and asks for input, a 60% diversion target doesn't mean anything. We can all say that we're going to have a diversion rate of 70%. We can all talk in politics and say, "Let's have 75%, let's have 100%." Look, folks, you can't stand up with credibility and say you're going to have a 60% diversion rate unless you've got a plan to get there. You've got no plan at all. All you're saying is, "We're going to go out and consult." I would have more respect for the minister, the ministry and the government if they had said, "Let's have a consultation on diversion so that we can increase the rates," and then after the consultation they said, "We think there are enough ideas in this package to increase it from"—they say 28%; I thought it was a lot higher than 28% right now. It must have fallen since I was minister, because we were at 38% before. I don't know what the Liberal government has done to drop it from 38% to 28%. At any rate, I suspect they're playing a game with the numbers: By knocking them way down to 28%, all of a sudden it's going to become 38%, which it actually is, and they're going to claim victory.

1740

Notwithstanding that, we would have had a lot more belief in what the minister was going to do with regard to diversion rates if, in fact, she had had this consultation, if

she wants it. I don't think there's a lot of magic to the solutions of having diversion. There's investment involved, but I don't know who they're going to get to invest, given their record with the Adams Mine and the person who put forward "an environmental solution" and then they pulled the rug from underneath him and didn't offer proper compensation.

Mr Leal: You could invest in centralized composting.

Mr Sterling: We did invest in composting, actually.

To someone who has been around for a long period of time, this bill is a tremendous disappointment with regard to forgetting some of the very basics of how you have to run a Ministry of the Environment. If you don't have a process that will stand up to scrutiny and time, and that a proponent can rely on, how can you get anybody bringing forward decent proposals? As I say, it takes eight to 10 years. If you know that at the end of eight to 10 years the government is just going to disregard you because there are some noisy objectors with regard to a particular proposal, then you're never going to have anybody come forward. Why would you waste your time, your effort, your money, your brains and all the rest of it with regard to a proposal?

We've seen this, not only with regard to the Adams Mine, but I also saw it in my own riding with regard to a very important industry in my riding, OMYA, where this minister, after a company had gone through all the processes to get a water-taking permit, just pulled the water-taking permit right off the table—didn't offer compensation, didn't offer a reason. They saw it coming, because they knew she had a political agenda against this particular company. What we have is a Minister of the Environment—a government—that is operating on political whim. They are not operating with regard to fairness. You're not dealing with fairness. Whoever squeaks the loudest is going to get their way. They're going to rely on evidence that is not scientifically based; there's no technology behind the decisions they're making.

Last but not least, they're absolutely ignoring the rule of law. They're absolutely ignoring treating everybody in this province in a fair and even-handed manner. That part of it is absolutely abhorrent. For them to make the political decision that they wanted to close down the Adams Mine—if the government wants to decide that, maybe they can do that. They can do that. They can just say, "To hell with the science, to heck with the process, we're going to close it down." But if they do that, then they've got to pay. It doesn't matter whether it's that government or the next government, they have to pay, and they have to pay according to the law as it was when they made their decision. They can't change the law after and say, "We didn't like the law because it allowed this particular proponent more compensation than we would like to give him or her." They have to do it according to the law of the day. They can't do it retrospectively. You can't go back and say, "We wish the law had been this and that you would only be allowed this much compensation." That's what you've done here. That's what Bill

49 does. Bill 49 goes back in time and says, "We don't like this proposal and we're going to deny the proponent fair compensation."

So I say to all businessmen who come to this province with this present government in place, which has a lack of respect for the rule of law and property rights, be wary. Be wary about investment. Be particularly wary about processes that include passing government regulations. Be wary of the Ministry of the Environment because it's going to make a decision which is not based on science; it's not going to be based on technology. It's going to be based on the political whim of a cabinet minister or a group of politicians or a group of people in a community who don't like a particular development. That is the truth. That is what's happening here, and it is a terrible black mark on our province that we should have a government do this so blatantly.

We have a tremendous environmental challenge as we go forward. We must deal with reality. We must deal with getting our garbage back from Michigan into Ontario. Hopefully, we can divert some of it so that we don't have to use our landfill sites. I don't like landfill sites any more than anybody else in this room, but they're a fact of life today. They are a fact of life today.

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): They're outdated.

Mr Sterling: We'll see where they get with regard to their 60% diversion rate.

Mr McMeekin: That's leadership.

Mr Sterling: Somebody across here says, "There's leadership." Leadership, my eye. Leadership is about creating realistic solutions based on science, based on a fair process, and not robbing people of their rights.

Hon Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): I could give you 100 examples.

Mr Sterling: Not robbing people of their rights, Ms Pupatello.

We have here, as I say, one of the most abhorrent, unfair—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Lanark-Carleton has the floor.

Mr Sterling: I'm going to wind up so my colleague can say a few words as well. But as I say, I guess what concerns me most is sort of the banal tripe that we've heard back in this debate about this being the most wonderful thing since sliced bread. As I say, dealing with landfill is a very difficult problem, notwithstanding the fact that everybody would love to say we can divert all of this or reuse or recycle all of this. That ain't going to be the case. So we have to deal with this in a scientific way, with a process where people know when they get involved with it that the government will hold to their word, and if they don't hold to their word, they can go to the courts for proper compensation.

Mr Dunlop: I'm pleased to finish off the time this afternoon on third reading debate on the leadoff for Bill 49, the Adams Mine Lake Act, 2004.

I have to agree with almost all of the comments made by the two previous speakers; first of all, all the comments made about closing down the Adams mine and what could happen as a result of the closing of the American border. We know that's a real possibility and, of course, there is no plan for that, unless it's a hidden plan. I assume within the bureaucracy of the Ministry of the Environment, there will be a hidden plan, and that's to take the waste from Toronto out to different landfills across the province, because the minister has the authority to do that. That will be a war at the time, of course, but this particular piece of legislation hides her from that right now.

But really, I look at this bill and I see the threats, and I mentioned it earlier. You haven't provided any technical reasons, and that falls back on what the member for Lanark-Carleton mentioned. It would be interesting and I challenge the Minister of the Environment to send us the technical reasons for changing the approval. My own personal opinion is it's all because of Minister Ramsay. I think he threatened to resign and I think that's what it's all about. It's pork-barrelling at its best.

Mr Wilkinson: Is this speculation?

1750

Mr Dunlop: Well, he threatened to resign if it went ahead. It's as plain and simple as that. You have carried ahead with that. It's strictly for political purposes.

If I can just give you another example of a political piece of legislation and of a political move by the Ministry of the Environment, by a Liberal government, this happened in 1989. On the landfill I've been most concerned about in my riding, site 41, the Environmental Assessment Board turned down site 41. But later on that year, just prior to the election that David Peterson lost, the member who had that township at the time was a Conservative and was running against the Liberals, of course. They had no chance of winning that riding. The three municipalities surrounding it that wanted to put their waste in this site were controlled, at that time, by Mr Ken Black. He was the Minister of Tourism. Out of nowhere, an order in council came through completely reversing the environmental assessment process, and plunked site 41 and gave re-approval to it.

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): What was the government then?

Mr Dunlop: It was the Liberals. That's the first sign. I can tell you, that is the beginning of why there's a problem here today.

The bottom line is, the minister in the House this afternoon, both with a question and when the minister summed up, both times she—

Interjection.

Mr Dunlop: Mr Caplan, you can heckle away all you want, but the first thing is, you don't know a thing you're talking about. It's pathetic how little you really know about this issue. You should be ashamed of yourself for heckling on this issue.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order. Would the member take his seat. The member for Simcoe North has the floor.

Mr Dunlop: I'm showing you a picture once again of the water that pumps out of that area. This has been identified. Anybody who opens their mouth on this area is referred to as some kind of rebel. The fact of the matter is almost a whole community now are rebels. When I was at a class last week, even grade 5 kids are asking if they can sign a petition and get it down here. All of the high schools have gotten together in north Simcoe, and they're all appealing on this. They're all asking that we sign petitions to stop this from going ahead.

When I asked the Environmental Commissioner to review it under the Environmental Bill of Rights, I got an answer back from the Minister of the Environment. It goes right back to them, by the way. When I asked the question about the volume—

Hon Ms Papatello: What were you doing for the last eight years, Garfield?

Mr Dunlop: Go back to the Walkerton inquiry. That will tell you everything. Your minister is referring to the Walkerton inquiry. Maybe you could do that. She has no idea, because the Walkerton inquiry has changed everything. Your minister is using this as an excuse.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order. Would the member please take his seat. I would like to ask the government members to allow the member for Simcoe North to make his points. He still has the floor.

Mr Dunlop: Very clearly, I am saying that the Walkerton inquiry changed everything. That is what the Minister of the Environment is saying about the Adams mine, although she's not providing the technical data. All I'm asking for are the technical data. She's blaming the Walkerton inquiry and the recommendations—water source protection. Now I'm hearing, "What happened over the last eight years?"

The Walkerton inquiry has changed everything with site 41. The water is pumping out of the ground at 545,000 litres per day. That's how much water will be pumped out of the ground. The Ministry of the Environment, in my question under the Environmental Bill of Rights, disputes that. They say, "No, that isn't the amount of water that's being pumped out of the ground."

But you know what? They don't give me the data to tell me how much water will be pumped out of the ground. They're telling me that while that landfill site is in existence or while it's under construction, there won't be any water pumped out. They think it's dry. They actually think the site is dry out there. If the Adams mine is a lake, then site 41, if I dig a hole 13 feet deep—that's where the water is, where the aquifer is—I'll bet you anything, in the morning the size of the whole landfill will be a lake, and we can define that as a lake. Apparently the Adams mine calls for, this particular bill calls for, nothing "less than one hectare" to be a lake.

Interjections.

Mr Dunlop: That's why I put through Bill 62. I asked for first reading. It came through the House. I'd love it.

I'd like the Minister of the Environment to take Bill 62. It parallels the Adams Mine Lake Act. It parallels it exactly. I challenge the Minister of the Environment to proceed with this piece of legislation.

Mr McMeekin: Don't challenge her. Go see her.

Mr Dunlop: Ask her. Put it back into committee. Let's see this bill in committee. Let's have committee hearings up in Simcoe county, discuss Bill 62 and see how many people love site 41. The bottom line is that that's why I can't ever support Bill 49. The fact of the matter is, you won't listen to any other problems across the province. You're only listening to the David Ramsay problem.

Mr Leal: They all leak.

Mr Dunlop: Exactly. You talk about water source protection—

Interjections.

Mr Dunlop: Mr Speaker, when the government caucus spoke, I never heckled one word. They've done nothing but yap away since I—

The Acting Speaker: I would ask the government members to please respect the right of the member for Simcoe North to finish his presentation.

Mr Dunlop: It's very simple. This particular site is four kilometres from the Wyevalle municipal water system and five kilometres from the Elmvale municipal water system. I think that's a problem.

On top of that, it lies within the area of an airport. It's closer than normal regulations. Now the Huronia Airport wants to expand the facility, and the new landfill will be right in the flight path of the—

Interjection.

Mr Dunlop: It's within eight clicks. It's wrong; it's the wrong thing to do. I'm pleading with the government

and with the Minister of the Environment that if you're going to do something with Bill 49, look at Bill 62 as well. Look at site 41. It's a mistake; it's an accident about to happen. It hasn't proceeded yet, but the fact of the matter is that that's why I want it on the floor today, to say a little bit on the Adams Mine Lake Act. I have to send this message home to the ministry. I know they're not listening; I know they really don't care.

Interjection.

Mr Dunlop: Mr Wilkinson says he is listening, but I don't believe that the bureaucrats in the Ministry of the Environment are listening about this in relation to site 41.

Hon David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): You fired them all.

Mr Dunlop: They're all there; believe me. If the Minister of Public Infrastructure would like some names, we can give you lots of names in the Ministry of the Environment. The bottom line is that site 41—

Hon Mr Caplan: Name names.

Mr Dunlop: See, here he goes; they go heckling again. We were quiet all the time they spoke, and we turned around and they've done nothing but yap and cry ever since we stood up to speak. It's too bad that they can't face the facts. They can't listen to the truth.

The truth is that Bill 49 is a mistake and site 41, in the county of Simcoe, is a mistake. As far as I'm concerned, it's something you will not change my mind about. I would appreciate any response that the ministry or the folks from the government would give me on Bill 62 and on the elimination of site 41.

The Acting Speaker: It being quite close to 6 o'clock, this House stands adjourned until 6:45 this evening.

The House adjourned at 1758.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Bramalea-Gore-Malton- Springdale	Kular, Kuldip (L)	Huron-Bruce	Mitchell, Carol (L)
Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Jeffrey, Linda (L)	Kenora-Rainy River	Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Brampton West-Mississauga / Brampton-Ouest-Mississauga	Dhillon, Vic (L)		Gerretsen, Hon / L'hon John (L) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement, ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Brant	Levac, Dave (L)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Milloy, John (L)
Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)		
Burlington	Jackson, Cameron (PC)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Kitchener-Waterloo	Van Bommel, Maria (L)
Chatham-Kent Essex	Hoy, Pat (L)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	Sterling, Norman W. (PC)
Davenport	Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Lanark-Carleton	Runciman, Robert W. (PC)
Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Caplan, Hon / L'hon David (L) Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy House Leader / ministre du Renouvellement de l'infrastructure publique, leader parlementaire adjoint	Leeds-Grenville	Matthews, Deborah (L)
Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Wynne, Kathleen O. (L)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	
Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey	Eves, Ernie (PC) Leader of the opposition / chef de l'opposition	London West / London-Ouest	Bentley, Hon / L'hon Christopher (L) Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail
Durham	O'Toole, John (PC)	London-Fanshawe	Ramal, Khalil (L)
Eglinton-Lawrence	Colle, Mike (L)	Markham	Wong, Tony C. (L)
Elgin-Middlesex-London	Peters, Hon / L'hon Steve (L) Minister of Agriculture and Food / ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga-Centre	Takhar, Hon / L'hon Harinder S. (L) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports
Erie-Lincoln	Hudak, Tim (PC)		Fonseca, Peter (L)
Essex	Crozier, Bruce (L) Deputy Speaker, Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Vice-Président, Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative	Mississauga East / Mississauga-Est	
	Cansfield, Donna H. (L)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Peterson, Tim (L)
Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre		Mississauga West / Mississauga-Ouest	Delaney, Bob (L)
Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Qaadri, Shafiq (L)	Nepean-Carleton	Baird, John R. (PC)
Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Broten, Laurel C. (L)	Niagara Centre / Niagara-Centre	Kormos, Peter (ND)
Glenarry-Prescott-Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Niagara Falls	Craitor, Kim (L)
Guelph-Wellington	Sandals, Liz (L)	Nickel Belt	Martel, Shelley (ND)
Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant	Barrett, Toby (PC)	Nipissing	Smith, Monique M. (L)
Haliburton-Victoria-Brock	Scott, Laurie (PC)	Northumberland	Rinaldi, Lou (L)
Halton	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Oak Ridges	Klees, Frank (PC)
Hamilton East / Hamilton-Est	Horwith, Andrea (ND)	Oakville	Flynn, Kevin Daniel (L)
		Oshawa	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)
		Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Patten, Richard (L)

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	McGuinty, Hon / L'hon Dalton (L) Premier and President of the Executive Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif, ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales	Stoney Creek	Mossop, Jennifer F. (L)
Ottawa West-Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest-Nepean	Watson, Hon / L'hon Jim (L) Minister of Consumer and Business Services / ministre des Services aux consommateurs et aux entreprises	Stormont-Dundas- Charlottenburgh	Brownell, Jim (L)
Ottawa-Orléans	McNeely, Phil (L)	Sudbury	Bartolucci, Hon / L'hon Rick (L) Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Ottawa-Vanier	Meilleur, Hon / L'hon Madeleine (L) Minister of Culture, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre de la Culture, ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones	Thornhill	Racco, Mario G. (L)
Oxford	Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Thunder Bay-Atikokan	Mauro, Bill (L)
Parkdale-High Park	Kennedy, Hon / L'hon Gerard (L) Minister of Education / ministre de l'Éducation	Thunder Bay-Superior North / Thunder Bay-Superior- Nord	Gravelle, Michael (L)
Parry Sound-Muskoka	Miller, Norm (PC)	Timiskaming-Cochrane	Ramsay, Hon / L'hon David (L) Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles
Perth-Middlesex	Wilkinson, John (L)	Timmins-James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	Bisson, Gilles (ND)
Peterborough	Leal, Jeff (L)	Toronto Centre-Rosedale / Toronto-Centre-Rosedale	Smitherman, Hon / L'hon George (L) Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge	Arthurs, Wayne (L)	Toronto-Danforth	Churley, Marilyn (ND)
Prince Edward-Hastings	Parsons, Ernie (L)	Trinity-Spadina	Marchese, Rosario (ND)
Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	Yakabuski, John (PC)	Vaughan-King-Aurora	Sorbara, Hon / L'hon Greg (L) Minister of Finance / ministre des Finances
Sarnia-Lambton	Di Cocco, Caroline (L)	Waterloo-Wellington	Arnott, Ted (PC) First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Sault Ste Marie	Oraziatti, David (L)		Flaherty, Jim (PC)
Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Duguid, Brad (L)	Whitby-Ajax	Zimmer, David (L)
Scarborough East / Scarborough-Est	Chambers, Hon / L'hon Mary Anne V. (L) Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités	Willowdale	Pupatello, Hon / L'hon Sandra (L) Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	Berardinetti, Lorenzo (L)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Duncan, Hon / L'hon Dwight (L) Minister of Energy, Chair of Cabinet, Government House Leader / ministre de l'Énergie, président du Conseil des ministres, leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Scarborough-Agincourt	Phillips, Hon / L'hon Gerry (L) Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement	Windsor-St Clair	Kwinter, Hon / L'hon Monte (L) Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Scarborough-Rouge River	Curling, Hon / L'hon Alvin (L) Speaker / Président		Munro, Julia (PC)
Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	York Centre / York-Centre	Cordiano, Hon / L'hon Joseph (L) Minister of Economic Development and Trade / ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Simcoe-Grey	Wilson, Jim (PC)	York North / York-Nord	Sergio, Mario (L)
St Catharines	Bradley, Hon / L'hon James J. (L) Minister of Tourism and Recreation / ministre du Tourisme et des Loisirs	York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston	
St Paul's	Bryant, Hon / L'hon Michael (L) Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones, ministre responsable du Renouveau démocratique	York West / York-Ouest	

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Mardi 15 juin 2004

PREMIÈRE LECTURE

Loi de 2004 sur la restructuration du secteur de l'électricité, projet de loi 100, <i>M. Duncan</i> Adoptée	2882
Loi de 2004 modifiant la Loi sur l'assurance-santé (dépistage complémentaire des nouveau-nés), projet de loi 101, <i>M. Baird</i> Adoptée	2882

TROISIÈME LECTURE

Loi de 2004 sur le lac de la mine Adams, projet de loi 49, <i>M^{me} Dombrowsky</i> Débat présumé ajourné.....	2916
---	------

CONTENTS

Tuesday 15 June 2004

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Haliburton Forest and Wildlife Reserve	
Ms Scott	2879
Sam Lawrence	
Ms Horwath	2879
Anniversary of Guyanese independence	
Mr Qaadri	2879
Rail overpass	
Mr Hardeman	2880
Rebound youth program	
Ms Di Cocco	2880
Ritson Road Alliance Church	
Mr Ouellette	2880
Neighbourhood Watch London	
Mr Ramal	2880
Community-based mental health services	
Mrs Jeffrey	2881
Federal election	
Mr Colle	2881

FIRST READINGS

Electricity Restructuring Act, 2004,	
Bill 100, <i>Mr Duncan</i>	
Agreed to	2882
Health Insurance Amendment Act (Supplemental Newborn Screening), 2004, Bill 101, <i>Mr Baird</i>	
Agreed to	2882
Mr Baird	2882

MOTIONS

Private members' public business	
Mr Duncan	2882
Agreed to	2882
House sittings	
Mr Duncan	2882
Agreed to	2883

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

Electricity restructuring	
Mr Duncan	2883
Mr O'Toole	2884
Mr Hampton	2885

ORAL QUESTIONS

Health care funding	
Mr Eves	2886
Mr McGuinty	2886, 2887
Mr Yakabuski	2886
Mr Hampton	2887
Health care services	
Mr Baird	2886
Mr McGuinty	2887
Electricity restructuring	
Mr Hampton	2888, 2890
Mr Duncan	2888, 2890
Minister's comments	
Mr Dunlop	2889
Mr McGuinty	2889
Protection of privacy	
Ms Broten	2890
Mr Phillips	2890
Agriculture programs	
Mr Hardeman	2891
Mr Peters	2891
Doctor shortage	
Mr Prue	2892
Mr Smitherman	2892
Quality of life	
Mr Racco	2893
Mr Sorbara	2893
Volunteer firefighters	
Mr Arnott	2893
Mr Kwinter	2893
Toronto Police Service	
Ms Churley	2894
Mr McGuinty	2894
Water quality	
Mrs Mitchell	2894
Mrs Dombrowsky	2894
Services for disabled children	
Mrs Witmer	2895
Mrs Bountrogianni	2895

PETITIONS

Chiropractic services	
Mr Jackson	2895
Mr Craitor	2896
Mrs Witmer	2896
Mr Wilson	2897
Mr Flynn	2897
Mr Yakabuski	2897
Mr Miller	2898

Optometrists

Ms Martel	2895
Municipal restructuring	
Mrs Van Bommel	2895
Property taxation	
Mr O'Toole	2896
Mr Leal	2896
Social assistance	
Ms Martel	2896
Health care	
Mr Ouellette	2897
Ontario budget	
Mr Miller	2897
Fish hatchery program	
Mr Ouellette	2897
Water quality	
Mr Yakabuski	2898

THIRD READINGS

Adams Mine Lake Act, 2004, Bill 49,	
<i>Mrs Dombrowsky</i>	
Mrs Dombrowsky	2898, 2908
Mrs Jeffrey	2900
Mr Qaadri	2902
Mr Parsons	2903
Mr Wilkinson	2904
Mr Barrett	2907, 2908
Ms Martel	2907
Mr Leal	2907
Mr Dunlop	2908, 2915
Mr Sterling	2912
Debate deemed adjourned	2916

OTHER BUSINESS

Estimates	
Mr Phillips	2879
The Speaker	2879
Annual report, Information and Privacy Commissioner	
The Speaker	2881
Visitors	
Mr Takhar	2885
The Speaker	2886

Continued overleaf



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of Ontario**

First Session, 38th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 38^e législature

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(Hansard)**

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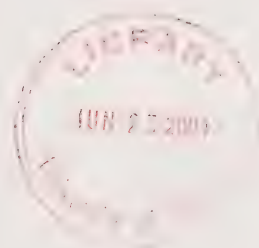
Mardi 15 juin 2004

Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 15 June 2004

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 15 juin 2004

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AND BUSINESS SERVICES STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LE MINISTÈRE DES SERVICES AUX CONSOMMATEURS ET AUX ENTREPRISES

Mr Watson moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 70, An Act to amend various Acts administered by or affecting the Ministry of Consumer and Business Services / Projet de loi 70, Loi modifiant diverses lois appliquées par ou touchant le ministère des Services aux consommateurs et aux entreprises.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Ted Arnott): I recognize the minister of consumer and commercial relations.

Hon Jim Watson (Minister of Consumer and Business Services): Thank you. I'm pleased to speak to second reading of Bill 70. I'm privileged to share my time today with the member for Mississauga West, the member for London-Fanshawe, the member for Thornhill and the member for York West.

This proposed legislation delivers on the McGuinty government's commitment to real, positive change that will give Ontarians the highest quality of life in North America. If passed, it will help to make Ontarians safer in their homes and communities by increasing the consumer protections they rely upon, while encouraging business to prosper. Bill 70 will also enhance electrical safety in the province of Ontario.

Je crois que tous les membres de cette assemblée sont désormais au courant que l'une des principales raisons pour lesquelles la Loi de 2004 modifiant des lois en ce qui concerne le ministère des Services aux consommateurs et aux entreprises est présentée est d'accélérer l'entrée en vigueur de la Loi de 2002 sur la protection du consommateur.

If the bill before you is passed, all members of the assembly may be assured that the regulations the government is striving to complete would increase protection in areas of concern to all consumers.

Over the past several months, the ministry has been working to develop regulations for the Consumer Protection Act, 2002, and the three related sector statutes:

the Motor Vehicle Dealers Act, the Real Estate and Business Brokers Act and the Travel Industry Act.

Working in partnership with stakeholders, which our ministry has a very good record of doing in consulting, the ministry has developed proposed regulations that we believe will address the ever-changing needs of the 21st-century marketplace. These proposed regulations are both fair to consumers and businesses alike and are practical to enforce. The ministry is privileged to have stakeholders who care deeply about today's important consumer protection issues, and of course the ministry listens closely to their viewpoints.

For example, draft regulations for the Consumer Protection Act were released to the public and stakeholders for review in 2003. In order to obtain maximum stakeholder input, these draft regulations were posted on the ministry's Web site. Since then, close to 6,000 consumers, businesses and organizations have viewed the draft regulations via the Internet. This represents more than 40 organizations, and the ministry received submissions from most of them. They included groups as diverse as banking associations, consumer advocacy groups, local home inspector associations and direct marketing organizations.

Issues of stakeholder interest run the range from credit and leasing to how long consumers should have to cancel an agreement with, say, a fitness club. On the topic of leasing, one stakeholder group pointed out that the draft regulations would not provide the same number of remedies to consumers who lease as would be available for consumers who buy on credit. One might have expected that this point would have been raised by a consumer advocacy group, but in fact it was pointed out by the leasing industry itself. We have acted on this observation.

1850

Additional suggestions have come from the minister's Consumer Advisory Council, which met on March 10, 2004. This is a group of men and women from across the province that meets with me and ministry officials to discuss current and future issues in the marketplace.

I'd like to offer just one example of their valuable input on proposed regulations to the Consumer Protection Act. One of the most valuable recommendations received from the council was the need to educate consumers on what action they can take when a business fails to meet its obligations. New ways to inform and educate consumers are always important to me and to our ministry. I want to thank very much the council, who do all of their work on a voluntary basis.

More recently, the ministry released draft regulations for the Travel Industry Act, 2002, for public and business consideration and input. Some of these draft regulations are important for religious organizations, amateur sports teams and cultural groups that may wish to plan trips for their members. If the Travel Industry Act, 2002, comes into force, a proposed regulation would offer an exemption for such groups. This exemption would give these groups the opportunity to serve as non-profit travel agents for overland trips without the burden of being registered travel agents. We all have groups that we know that take advantage of these kinds of trips. We're trying to make it as easy and as unbureaucratic as possible.

The draft regulations also propose to set new standards for travel agents' trust accounts and for the funds contributed to Ontario's travel industry compensation fund. Consultation sessions with travel professionals to discuss the draft regulations were organized by the Travel Industry Council of Ontario, also known as TICO, which regulates travel agents and wholesalers in Ontario on behalf of the government.

Travel agents represent a large range of small, medium and large organizations. It is these travel agents who help customers choose and book travel services, including services that come from airlines and cruise lines, known in the industry as end suppliers. Airlines and cruise lines are not under provincial jurisdiction. With the assistance of the Travel Industry Council of Ontario, the issue of end supplier failure was raised.

Since September 11, 2001, Ontario's travel industry has suffered a number of significant setbacks. Decreased consumer travel due to such things as SARS and the impact of Canada 3000's bankruptcy have affected the profit picture of many agencies.

As part of the bill before this Legislature, the government would narrow the liability for travel agents and wholesalers for airline and cruise line failures. They would not be liable for amounts in excess of those provided by the industry compensation fund. Travel agents all pay into the compensation fund. It affords consumers protection of up to \$5,000 per traveller, or \$5 million total, if a cruise line or airline fails. At present, Ontario is alone among Canadian provinces in imposing liability on travel agencies that have paid for the services they have booked for their customers beyond the limit of the compensation fund.

Although the travel agency has already fulfilled its obligation, if the service is not delivered, the consumer can return to the agency for compensation. The amendment bill would remove this obligation from the industry, protecting the small operator that would otherwise be forced into bankruptcy. At the same time, and this is important to realize, the proposed regulations retain the consumer protection of up to \$5,000 per traveller that is available through the compensation fund.

Michael Pepper, who is the registrar and CEO of the council, says, "This change to section 25(2) of the Travel Industry Act, 2002, which eliminates the overflow

liability placed on registrants who have fulfilled their obligations to their clients, is welcome news to Ontario's 3,000 travel registrants. TICO applauds the government for putting forward this legislative change."

To return to the ministry's work on regulations for a moment, one area in which the ministry has been working to develop draft regulations would result in the modernization of the Real Estate and Business Brokers Act, 2002, or REBBA, as it is more commonly known.

On April 30, a draft regulation on the parts of the legislation dealing with a professional code of ethics was distributed to known stakeholders and made available on the ministry's Web site.

The code of ethics is a critical tool to ensure high ethical standards and professional conduct throughout the real estate sales sector in Ontario. In May of this year, a proposed regulation dealing with registration and other matters was distributed. We have one of the greatest real estate agents in the province of Ontario sitting next to me here, the honourable member from Hamilton West, who knows all about the good work that our ministry is doing and the work that REBBA is doing. The ministry did release regulations in two segments, in the interests of obtaining stakeholder responses as quickly as possible, without waiting for all the draft regulations to be complete. Ministry staff will welcome discussions, suggestions and recommendations until the end of this month.

As well as working toward the completion of proposed regulations, the government is introducing some new advantages for consumers and businesses regarding real estate sales through Bill 70. For example, under this bill, the Real Estate Council of Ontario, or RECO, as it is known, which regulates the sector on behalf of the government, could work together with community colleges and other organizations to develop the top-notch specialty training that professionals in the sector need in today's marketplace. Bill 70 also includes a provision to make it clear that action taken by RECO to freeze assets can be taken not only against registrants but against individuals who should be registered but who are not. Board chair Kenneth Hajas says, "The Real Estate Council of Ontario is particularly pleased the government is increasing its ability to protect public monies when individuals and businesses trade in real estate in contravention of the act."

Many other areas that protect consumers are included in Bill 70. For example, another clarification contained in the bill would benefit consumers who have difficulty understanding the process by which information is held in their credit files. It would set out clearly in the legislation how long information about consumer credit can remain on consumer reports held by credit reporting agencies. The amendment bill would also provide for proposals to implement a province-wide licensing system for electrical contractors and electricians. This would allow electrical contractors to work in any part of the province, instead of being excluded from contracts because of the current patchwork of local licensing requirements that does not permit them to participate.

Under the current system, the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities administers the apprenticeship program for electricians. It's an excellent program, and I commend Minister Chambers for the work that she and her ministry have done. However, once the formal apprenticeship is complete, renewal of a worker's certificate is not linked to knowledge of current safety standards. At one time, this was not a serious consideration. Electrical equipment and processes did not change quickly, so knowledge learned at the age of 20 was largely appropriate to the workplace throughout an electrician's career. Today, as we all know, technology and safety standard changes take place at a rapidly increasing rate.

De nouveaux équipements, de nouvelles méthodes de travail plus sécuritaires et de nouvelles normes techniques ont modifié les compétences que les ouvriers en électricité doivent posséder pour assurer leur propre sécurité et celle de leurs clients.

How would the government propose to develop a modern, consistent and efficient, province-wide electrical safety system? I'm sure many of the members are asking that same question day in and day out. A uniform licensing framework would be proposed for electrical contractors, master electricians and electricians with the new standards set out in regulations.

Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough): The people of Peterborough ask that question every day.

Mr Watson: Absolutely. The good people of Peterborough were asking their member, probably the finest member from Peterborough this century. Just remember I said "this century"—and perhaps last century.

Uniform standards are important in Ontario, where at present approximately 70 municipalities license contractors based on unique local standards and many do not license them at all. The Electrical Safety Authority, or ESA, as it is commonly known, would agree to undertake this ambitious electrical safety plan for Ontario. The ESA currently supports the government in administering public electrical safety through a program of public awareness and the inspection of electrical installations. ESA's efforts to preserve public electrical safety represent an important contribution to the work of the government.

To help inform and educate the people of Ontario about electrical safety, the ESA has developed a special consumer-friendly Web site. ESAsafe.com shows consumers how they can make a difference in ensuring the safety of their homes and their families. It offers some basic electrical safety tips and advises consumers to research electrical projects before they start, and to arrange electrical inspections if they're concerned about their home's electrical system.

1900

Also, the ESA works closely with the fire marshal's office and the coroner's office to produce an annual Electrical Safety in Ontario report. That report reinforces the ongoing need to take precautions when dealing with electrical installations.

ESA also works as chair of an alliance among members of the electrical industry dedicated to increasing public safety by coordinating annual information campaigns.

I want to point out that another great supporter of this provision of the bill is the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers. We're delighted to have the president of the IBEW, Robert Gullins, in the gallery today and we thank Mr Gullins very much. This is obviously not just about business, it's about the workers, and the IBEW is certainly very interested in safety for their own workers and safety for consumers. Mr Gullins, thank you for taking the time to be with us today.

Si le projet de loi 70 est adopté, le gouvernement prévoit élaborer des règlements qui permettront de réaliser d'ici cinq ans cet ambitieux projet d'octroi de permis à l'échelle provinciale.

This amendment bill would also help the government implement harmonization agreements that would help Ontario businesses that operate across Canada by providing national standards in specific areas, including Internet sales agreements and cost of credit disclosure. This approach would harmonize with the systems being adopted by other provinces.

Finally, the amendment bill would introduce various housekeeping changes. Some would simplify government processes or eliminate requirements that are unnecessary burdens on businesses. Others would clarify existing provisions, correct simple errors or repeal provisions that have become outdated or unnecessary.

One example that comes to mind is a requirement that corporations provide written information to certain parties when directors resign. The same information is required to be published in another section of the legislation, so the redundant section of this bill would be removed under Bill 70.

In summary, Bill 70 would achieve the four key objectives it sets out to accomplish: It would strengthen consumer protection; electrical safety standards would be enhanced; it would harmonize laws and standards, serving to encourage business success and protect consumers in a consistent manner; and this bill would accomplish a number of housekeeping changes.

I hope that all members of the assembly will support Bill 70. I know from the comments I heard from the honourable member for Leeds-Grenville that his party is in support of this. I want to thank my predecessor, the honourable member for Erie-Lincoln, for the work he did when he was Minister of Consumer and Business Services.

This is a good piece of legislation that is going to benefit consumers and businesses alike. It's something I'm very proud of, and I wanted to take this opportunity to thank the staff at the Ministry of Consumer and Business Services who have worked very hard in consulting our stakeholders. As I mentioned earlier, we have literally hundreds of stakeholders, in fact thousands of people, who went to the Web site to view the various draft regulations. It's a ministry staff that I think we in

this chamber can all be proud of. They reach out, they consult, and they're not afraid to make changes when it's in the best interests of the public. I salute those men and women at consumer and business services, as I do the stakeholders, the volunteers, the association people and the union representatives who have worked hand in hand with this government to ensure that this bill sees the light of day.

It's my hope that we are able to pass this piece of legislation before the end of June, for the simple reason that the industry, business and labour are very much in agreement. They'd like to see the legislation passed. I know the member from Leeds-Grenville will be co-operative, as will the member from Niagara, as he usually is in this place, and I look forward to hearing their comments. I know they want to keep these remarks relatively brief because there's another major event on television tonight. We might lose some of our ratings if we don't finish too early here. We want to see how well the Prime Minister does in the debate. With those remarks, I thank the House for their consideration and I cede the floor to the member for Mississauga West.

Mr Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): A number of years ago, I played hockey with a group of guys, some of whom were commercial lawyers. They had a jersey for their firm team that some of them wore to our pickup games. Its logo was their business unit slogan: "Dull but profitable."

Bill 70 is similar in its implications and its scope. It touches many aspects of doing business for tradespeople in Ontario. It helps strengthen consumer protection. It deals with enhanced standards, harmonization of laws and standards, doing things in a consistent manner, and it accomplishes what are in business called "housekeeping changes."

No one speaker, or even a half a dozen, will be able to cover and explain the scope of this bill in just a few minutes. I'd like to speak to and explain a few of its key proposals. Rather than do an overview, I'll focus on just a few key points of Bill 70.

For most people, the minutiae of how electrical contractors, electricians and master electricians are licensed and the dense print that describes it is an even more effective non-prescription sedative than rereading some of my old trade magazine articles on high-tech marketing. However, because dull really is profitable, the dense print in these statutes and the regulations that govern how much it costs to get a home built and how much it costs to renovate your office are truly that important. The impact of these changes is the driving force behind the 80 proposals for changes to 24 of the 66 statutes administered by the Ministry of Consumer and Business Services.

Let me discuss electrical safety. Bill 70 closes some significant gaps in the current licensing system for the electrical sector. Proposed amendments to the Electricity Act will enable the government to develop an Ontario-wide licensing system for contractors in the compulsory electrical trades. What this means to you, as a tradesman

or a journeyman, is that with a single licence, you'll be able to work anywhere in Ontario. In contrast, five different organizations currently share part of the responsibility for licensing 4,500 electrical contractors and some 50,000 electricians in Ontario. Grouped together, this legislation affects enough people to make a medium-sized Ontario city.

About 70 municipalities license electrical contractors, based on unique and often different local standards. Some Ontario municipalities do not license electrical contractors at all, and licensing standards can vary widely from one town to the next. If you are either a young electrician or a contractor trying to expand your business, you'd look at the tangled and possibly contradictory maze of regulations and say, "This just doesn't make any sense."

Your government agrees with you, and it's going to fix the situation. Soon, you will be able to work anywhere in Ontario, and the experience, certificates and qualifications that you obtained in one part of Ontario will be recognized by an employer in another part of Ontario. Similarly, as an employer, you'll have a level playing field when assessing prospective employees, as the qualifications earned by an applicant in one part of Ontario will be qualifications that make sense to you in another part of Ontario.

Currently, the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities administers the apprenticeship program for electricians. Following adoption of this bill, the Electrical Safety Authority will provide a uniform provincial licensing system and will license electrical contractors, master electricians and electricians. This is a critical change.

Let me explain the need from a personal experience. Late one night a few years ago, I heard fire engine sirens on my street. The neighbour's house on the corner was on fire, and his entire roof was ablaze. The neighbour and his family were not home at the time. The fire had started due to an electrical fault, when wiring that was not up to code had been installed during a renovation. The problem had lain dormant for more than a year. Had one of the teenagers on the street not been coming home late at night, smelled the smoke, spotted the fire and called the fire department, our neighbour would have lost his home and everything in it.

Good standards and the uniform application of good standards, especially in electrical work, is not just good business; it saves lives and life-long possessions. Though the damage to the house was extensive, much of my neighbour's property was saved.

1910

Just as in information technology, the pace of change in electrical work is rapid. The workers who install and maintain electrical wiring and fixtures, just like the people who write your software and install your computer hardware, need to stay current with the latest technology. Just because you've always done it that way doesn't mean to say there isn't a better way or a safer way.

The solution is ongoing training to keep the skills and the practices of even the best master electrician up to

date. Accreditation, whether in the professions or the trades, is a great chance to step outside your accustomed role and your familiar daily routine—to think not about what you're doing, but how you do it and why you do it the way you do it.

If you're watching this, and if you're an IT professional, a lawyer or an accountant, you know how valuable ongoing professional development is. If you're an electrician, you're soon going to benefit from clear, consistent, portable training in the same beneficial career way that other trades and professions do.

If passed, the bill gives the Electrical Safety Authority, or ESA, the authority to license, register and certify electrical contractors, master electricians and electricians. The ESA will develop a plan to bring province-wide licensing and training into force, something they lack the authority to do now.

This is a five-year plan. It will begin with electrical contractors in areas where they are currently licensed in the first year of the project. As a contractor, you'll find fair and equitable "grandfather" provisions if you don't immediately meet the licensing standards. You'll be eligible for a provisional licence while you fulfill the master electrician requirements.

Once the proposed amendments are in force, you'll be able to call a toll-free line for information as the program is phased in across Ontario. Consumers will be able to verify whether a contractor anywhere in Ontario is licensed. It's going to raise standards of excellence. It's going to maintain a level playing field, especially for contractors whose business practices are solid and who invest in their employees' skills. Small wonder then that this plan has the solid support of professionals, labour organizations and businesses all across Ontario.

This bill is about good, healthy, fair competition in business. It's about progressive, modern standards that protect Ontarians. It has many more facets than I have discussed here and I look to my colleagues to bring out other aspects during further debate.

Mr Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): I will be speaking in support of Bill 70. Bill 70 has four key objectives: (1) It will strengthen consumer protection; (2) electrical safety standards will be enhanced; (3) it will harmonize laws and standards, serving to encourage business success—

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leeds-Grenville): Who gave you that tie?

Mr Racco: May I speak for the people, please? Thank you—and protect consumers in a consistent manner; and (4) will accomplish a number of housekeeping changes that potentially—

Interjections.

Mr Racco: If both the PC and NDP members will allow me to speak on behalf of my people—that's why we are here. Speaker, you may wish to talk to these two gentlemen, so I can continue my discussion. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Thornhill, would you please take your seat.

Mr Racco: I'm trying to—

The Acting Speaker: Would you please take your seat?

I would ask all members of the House to allow the member for Thornhill to make his presentation to the House.

Mr Racco: Thank you, Speaker. I'm sorry; I couldn't hear what you were saying.

It will allow the government to create a new system of licensing and training for electrical contractors and electricians. It will also lead to the creation of a new appeal process to help ensure the system is fair. It will help to create a more level playing field and discourage the underground economy. It would weed out unfair competition from unqualified contractors who work underground without proper apprenticeship, training and experience.

Under the consumer protection initiatives, the Ministry of Consumer and Business Services, MCBS, administers 66 statutes that cover the most important and fundamental consumer and business practices. MCBS is involved in some other major outreach initiatives as well, and the ministry launches an identity theft campaign, a large project that involves financial institutions and law enforcement agencies. The result is a new publication on how to avoid identity theft, in the hands of more than 100,000 consumers. Most importantly, this will protect the consumer.

Under film classification, the proposed amendments to the Theatres Act, if passed, will enable the Ontario Film Review Board, OFRB, to adapt the classifications and ratings of films determined by other organizations.

The amendments would help business by improving efficiency for film distributors and help consumers make an informed choice, a choice that parents and taxpayers in Thornhill, and Ontario, have been asking for, an informed choice that will allow a taxpayer to choose based on a person's wants and needs.

The amendments will also give the government the legislative authority to ensure that video games are classified and labelled for age appropriateness. Again, it's something that consumer and professional groups have been asking for.

It will also help consumers in the travel industry, as has been said earlier. Passage of these proposed amendments as soon as possible would no longer impose liability on travel agents in the event of an airline failure. However, as the federal government holds the regulatory responsibility for airlines, Ottawa must provide a leadership role with respect to air carrier failures. Ontario encourages provincial and federal governments to develop a strategy to address consumer protection in ways that are fairer than imposing airline or cruise line liability on individual travel agents.

Under housekeeping amendments, there are 24 technical and housekeeping amendments that have been proposed to simplify government processes, to eliminate requirements that are an unnecessary burden on business, to clarify existing provisions, to correct errors and repeal outdated or unnecessary provisions. For example, one

change would eliminate the requirement for publication of a material correction to a corporation's articles in the Ontario Gazette under the Business Corporations Act. MCBS now electronically updates the public database and reflects those changes, and the public has immediate access to this information.

For electrical safety standards—and I'm pleased that the union leader is here tonight—most importantly in my area, Thornhill has many electrical contractors that operate from my riding. They will be happy about this bill and so will, potentially, the member from Hamilton. This bill would enable improvements in public safety, allowing the government to close significant gaps in the current licensing system for the electrical sector.

They will support Ontario businesses by allowing them to work anywhere in the province with a single licence, which is not the case presently. In fact, five different organizations share some part of the responsibility for licensing the 4,500 electrical contractors and 50,000 electricians in Ontario. Approximately 70 municipalities license contractors based on unique local standards, and some do not licence contractors at all. Licensing standards can vary greatly from one town to the next.

If the bill is passed, the Electrical Safety Authority would be given the legislative authority to licence, register and certify electrical contractors, master electricians and electricians. Under the plan, ESA would grandfather contractors who do not meet the new licensing standards through provisional licences and allow them the time to fulfill the requirements.

The government plans to develop details over the licence standards in regulation, in consultation with stakeholders. This proposal has the support of industry stakeholders, including professional labour and business, such as the electrical unions, the Electrical Contractors Association of Ontario, the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers in Ontario, the Electrical Safety Authority and the Ontario Electrical League, among a number of them, and certainly in my area, A-1 Service Group and Canada Electric Ltd from Concord.

There is also the Real Estate Council of Ontario, the Ontario Motor Vehicle Industry Council—

Interjection.

Mr Racco: Speaker, I hope you can hear me, since the member from Hamilton insists on talking while I am speaking, which I find to be very offensive. Nonetheless, I hope that the NDP will be able to support this bill so that we can do what's necessary, not only in the ethical electrical contracting industry, but in all the other changes that we are proposing.

1920

Mr Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe): As always, I'm honoured to stand up in this place to speak on behalf of my constituents of London-Fanshawe, just like the honourable member from Thornhill speaking on behalf of his constituents.

I listened to the Minister of Consumer and Business Services for his detail about the bill and how the bill

would benefit the people of this province. From my experience, that's what I heard from the member from Mississauga West when he was talking about his personal experience, about his neighbour whose house caught on fire due to an improper or unsafe wiring system done by one of the electricians.

I believe that this bill, if passed, would help all the people in this province and also would fulfill another commitment our government promised to do before the election. When I went through this bill and the issues and elements it speaks about, I was very impressed when it started talking about safety and how we can license the electricians across this province.

At the present time, we have 70 different municipalities licensing across this province. Every city has different standards. Sometimes when a person is licensed in one city or town, he cannot use his profession in other towns and cities, which makes it difficult for the people who work hard to earn that licence and are not certified when they try to use it in another city, which can create some kind of division of the standards across this province.

This initiative from the minister is a great step toward unifying the licensing across this province. The minister and the ministry, I believe, are not going to give one licence across the province without consultation with the stakeholders and also working in conjunction with the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities in order to give the licence—a proper licence—and put the proper standard that everyone wants to adopt so that that profession will be trained well and, when they're given a licence, he can practise his profession anywhere in this province, and do what's right, not only for the sake of the electricians or the profession, but also for the safety of the people of this province.

When I listened to my colleague from Mississauga West, I was very impressed, because this example would apply in every spot in this province. If we start allowing people without licences, without proper training, to start using the professions it will cost a safe environment and a safe community. I think this initiative is great for the protection of the people of this province.

Another very important thing I went through talked about the protection act for the consumers, the consumer protection initiative. So many people in this province are consumers looking for protection. We don't want to leave the whole trade open to anyone for fraud, for theft. I know a lot of people come to this land and they don't know what the regulations are, how to deal with a company, how to deal with contractors, how to deal with any consumer or any business in this province. This act will strengthen safety and make sure all the consumers are protected and looked after by the government and the Ministry of Consumer and Business Services.

Another important point the minister brought to the table which I think is very important is working with the two levels of government, the provincial and the federal. With much of the licensing, people and professionals can use their professions in this province, but when they

move to different provinces, they cannot use their profession. Hopefully, this bill will be a good step to open negotiations between all the provinces across this country to have unified professions. Everyone in this province, everyone who has worked hard in their lifetime will be able to use their profession somewhere else, outside this province.

Another important step that this bill will justify and will help is film classification, which put a lot of burden, a lot of regulation, on this industry. Leave it open, without regulation. I believe we owe the people of this province some kind of protection, some kind of attention by serving the consumer or customer with clear service by providing or forcing the film industry to label the film, detailing what it includes. So many people don't know what a film includes or what it's all about. I think that in order to work and protect our generation, we have to be honest and sincere. We have to be open. We have to be clear about the service we supply to the people of this province.

Also, a very important thing, especially for the tourism industry in this country, is that after September 11, many regulations or rules were imposed on the travel agencies across the province. The minister mentioned liability, where a small company has to provide about \$5 million in order to conduct business. I think that number is too great. It's too big, and some small companies cannot absorb it. This will force a lot of small companies to go bankrupt. Therefore, this bill will eliminate this point and give small companies a chance to conduct business. In other ways, it will help the tourism industry in this province to grow and prosper.

This bill also gives a lot of details about other aspects: housekeeping, the services in this province, how we can provide it without duplicating the service, without asking too much of the companies in order to conduct business. I think by working together, the ministry in this province and the federal government can eliminate a lot of rules and regulations. We can invent ways to eliminate all this duplication in services and the burden put on the industry, which will allow them to do a good business, make profits and then expand across this province.

Further, I hope that from this debate all the members of this House, both sides, all parties, will support this bill. I cannot see, from reading this bill, any element that may contradict any of the party philosophies in this House. I'm looking forward to the NDP and the Conservatives coming forward to support this bill, so that we may keep having a prosperous province, open more businesses and create a safer environment and protections for the consumers and the people of this province.

I'm looking forward to hearing a lot of input and ideas from the NDP and the Conservatives on this bill, in order to enhance and go forward with a better future with this government for the people of this province.

I thank you, Minister, for allowing me to speak on this bill.

1930

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): I'm very pleased to rise today in support of Bill 70 and to conclude the gov-

ernment portion of this debate. But just in case, I would like to share some of my time, if time permits, with the member from Scarborough Southwest.

Just to continue debate on the bill that has been introduced by Minister Watson, I would like to congratulate the Minister for Consumer and Business Services on introducing his first bill to this House, to this assembly. It is an important piece of legislation that I know the minister is eager to move very much forward. He's looking for and asking for the support of this House today.

I'm also very pleased to speak about this bill, which would benefit the people of Ontario in the area of electrical safety. As Minister Watson noted earlier, passage of Bill 70 would provide Mr McGuinty's government with an opportunity to improve electrical safety for the citizens of Ontario. It would allow the government to create a new system of licensing for electrical contractors and electricians as well. This legislation would also make it possible to develop a strong new enforcement process. It would also lead to the creation of a new appeals process to help ensure that the system is, in fact, fair.

As you have heard, under Bill 70 the government would create a province-wide licensing system for contractors and electricians. If the electrical safety program proposed by the government were in place, consumers could have more confidence that work gets done by qualified contractors. The opportunity also exists to improve electricians' access to state-of-the-art training. All this would be made possible through Bill 70.

Ontario's trained electrical workers are already very highly skilled.

I'm pleased to welcome and introduce to the House the support of Mr Robert Gullins, president of Local 353 of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, who is here to follow the progress of Bill 70 as it moves through the process in the House. I would like to welcome Mr Gullins as well.

Mr Gullins wanted me to acknowledge that Bill 70 would enhance the level of electrical worker safety and competency in Ontario. His 37 years in the electrical trade made it quite clear that much has changed over the years. An electrical worker today has to be equipped with extensive knowledge in order to install the more complex systems that the world offers today.

We all note that our economy relies increasingly on automated systems and computer technology. This makes the consumer's life much simpler. But few of us stop to think of the ever-growing demand for increasing technical skills needed to support the 21st-century marketplace. The knowledge and technical skills needed by workers will continue to grow in the future, and Ontario's electrical professionals must meet the challenges.

Also, despite the fact that the skilled contractors and electricians of Ontario are highly qualified, when it comes to safety, you must be ever vigilant. Province-wide licensing would help encourage contractors, electricians and master electricians to keep up with new developments in electrical safety.

It would also permit contractors to work anywhere in Ontario. As it is now, standards for electrical contractors'

licensing differ from one municipality to another. If Bill 70 is passed and province-wide contractor licensing comes into force, the Electrical Safety Authority—or ESA, as it is known—would work together with contractors in all areas of the province to make sure that the system is effective and fair. This would also include the many electrical contractors and municipalities where business licences have never been required. Rules for the new licensing system would be set in our regulations.

Bill 70 would help honest electrical businesses prosper by letting them work anywhere in the province, using just one uniform license. Now, they often need separate licences to work in jurisdictions that may be across the street from one another.

It would also offer another advantage: If Bill 70 were to be passed—and I'm sure that it will—it would help to create a more level playing field and discourage the underground economy. It would indeed weed out unfair competition from unqualified contractors who work underground without the proper apprenticeship, training and experience. If all qualified contractors were licensed, those who tell consumers they are qualified would be able to prove it. Consumers could ask to see their licences.

The changes proposed to the Electricity Act, 1998, under Bill 70 would help to better protect the public and workers by improving electrical safety. This would cut administrative costs for contractors and allow them to compete for jobs anywhere in Ontario. They would help deliver on the McGuinty government's commitment to real, positive change that will give Ontarians the highest quality of life in North America.

To develop the program necessary to bring about these changes, ESA would work closely with the government and stakeholders. ESA is the agency that now inspects and approves electrical designs and equipment in Ontario, so that people will know if their homes are indeed safe. ESA does an excellent job of inspections, and anyone who has concerns about the safety of their home electrical system can call ESA to arrange for an inspection. In addition to its inspection work, ESA offers public information and services to help people protect themselves against potential shock and fire hazards. ESA wants people to know that they can make a difference in keeping their homes and family safe as well.

To help keep safe, ESA advises consumers to follow certain basic safety tips. These include simple things such as checking frayed electrical cords and overloaded outlets often. Also, consumers should do some research before hiring workers for electrical projects around the home. And consumers should arrange with ESA for electrical inspections if they have concerns about their home systems.

The government also wants people to know about all the information ESA makes available, both for adults and to teach children about electrical safety. For example, ESA Safety Flash notices warned consumers about the possible dangers of portable generators during last summer's power outage. Also, ESA publishes recall

notices on unsafe electrical products that range from industrial equipment to laser printers, from ceiling fans to coffeemakers. These are distributed to Ontario media and posted on ESA's Web site. Safety tips for children are offered by the ESA mascot, in posters that feature Buddy the Jack Russell terrier. Buddy helps youngsters learn to avoid dangerous power lines and utility equipment.

ESA is dedicated to educating consumers. The government now wishes to work with ESA to allow every Ontario consumer to know that their electrical contractor is a licensed professional.

All I ask of the members of this assembly is to support Bill 70 and allow the government to improve electrical safety standards for the people in Ontario.

1940

I hope indeed, in the brief time we have to debate the bill, that the message is getting through to all members on both sides of the House, the third party and the opposition party. I believe the people of Ontario would be looking to this type of legislation to feel more secure, to alleviate some of the fears they may have. I don't have to tell you, especially at this time of year when a lot of families are considering doing renovations, additions to their properties or whatever, that a good, qualified electrician comes in very handy and can alleviate a lot of anxiety.

I don't have to tell you that we all get calls from our constituents, especially from seniors. What better message can we send to our constituents throughout the province—it doesn't matter which riding we represent—than that they can call a qualified contractor, a qualified electrician with a licence? For sure we all understand that this carries a lot of satisfaction and security in that whoever they may be calling will be qualified not only to do the job but to do a safe job.

As well, we have new families. We have first-time purchasers of new homes who will try to make improvements. Again, they may need brand new lines, if you will, wiring. They may acquire new and more sophisticated equipment—new washers, dryers, computers, what have you—and they may bring the entire system more up to date. I think this brings contentment to those people, and safety, that the work will be done in an appropriate and safe manner.

I remember when my colleague here from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell was working with contractors from across our province, between Quebec and Ontario and Ontario and Quebec. He brought to the attention of the House that some contractors, for example, couldn't go and do work in certain areas because they needed a different licence, or no licence at all in other areas. I think bringing uniformity to this type of business is extremely important even to the professions, to contractors and electricians as well.

What better message can we send out there than that these people don't have to fear any more that if they go outside of their particular jurisdictions, whatever they may be, they cannot do the work because they don't have the necessary documentation, the necessary licence to go

and do work in a particular area? This must be a huge satisfaction for those people out there, and I'm sure the message will carry out of this House into the marketplace, into the various communities, into the industry.

I said before that I'm delighted we have the support of the president of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Mr Gullins. I'm sure he will carry the message out there as well and say, "Folks, it's high time; it's about time we had one licence to worry about." I'm sure Mr Gullins will take to his members the message, "We want professional people, well-trained people." This is the message we want to send to the public, to the marketplace and to the industry as well.

I don't have to tell you that we have a huge shortage of skilled trades all over the place: electricians, contractors, qualified skilled trades, especially electricians. It's one of those fields that builders look at very much because of the demand in the construction industry. What better measure can we send to that industry—to the union people and to the many individual contractors, electricians, the labour movement—to make sure they can find it much easier to face the labour force, the marketplace, when we make it easy for them to obtain a licence? We can say, "This is Ontario. You're licensed. You can go and work wherever you want." It's a good message to send out there. But above all it is the work that our minister, Mr Watson, and the staff have done in bringing this bill together, and putting it together in such a way that it delivers a very clear, very strong message that it is important, it is a good thing to do, it's a must-do for the government. Mr McGuinty has been aiding in moving this bill forward. I can't see any member of the House opposing it for whatever reason.

Interjection.

Mr Sergio: Absolutely. There is no reason whatsoever.

I would encourage the members of the House to call on the minister and say, "You know what? This bill is so good that we don't have to postpone it any longer. Let's do it. Move it for first, second and third reading." It's a good bill. It's a good piece of legislation. It's good for us here in the House and it's good for the people of Ontario out there.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): I'm pleased to comment a little bit on Bill 70, An Act to amend various Acts administered by or affecting the Ministry of Consumer and Business Services. This is quite a bill. This is probably one of the biggest bills you guys have put in since you got here.

Interjection.

Mr Murdoch: An omnibus bill, yes.

I'm glad to see that the minister's here. You forgot something in this, Mr Minister. We could have certainly done our marriage commissioners right with this bill, if you had been thinking over there. I know you probably would have done it if you had thought about it, but we do need that act. For some reason, it's not in this bill. I thought for sure it would have been there, but it's not.

As you know, there is a bill that's passed this House. All you'd have to do is put in some regulations and we would have a marriage commissioner. It's something that's certainly needed in rural and northern Ontario. It may not be so much of a problem down here in Toronto, but I know you don't think about Toronto as some people in your party do.

The thing I noticed about this is that people are going to have a hard time just knowing whether you're on the right track here or not. It seems OK. As the last speaker just said, maybe we should just pass it now and go home. I'm not so sure whether we want to do that, though, because we're having a little trouble trusting you guys lately.

Applause.

Mr Murdoch: I appreciate the applause, but we are having some trouble just appreciating what you guys are trying to prove here in Ontario. As you know, people are cranky. I think they might get cranky at us if we started saying, "There's a bill, Bill 70. We should just let it go."

But I am really disappointed that you don't have something in here about the marriage commissioners. We certainly do need them, as I say, especially in our area, in rural Ontario. So I'm looking forward to the minister bringing something forward very soon on that.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Folks, it's 10 to 8 on Tuesday night. At 8 o'clock folks should be picking up the clicker and tuning in to CBC Newsworld. I really encourage people to watch—

Mr Runciman: It's on Global and CTV as well.

Mr Kormos: Global, CTV and Newsworld at 8 o'clock, in around 10 or 11 minutes' time, to watch Paul Martin get the stuffing kicked out of him by some very skilful debate by Jack Layton, amongst others.

Interjections.

Mr Kormos: Well, if you watched last night—far be it from me to feel sorry for Paul Martin. What with all his family wealth, Canada Steamship Lines, those Cayman Island bank accounts and all the millions that his family enterprise makes without ever paying taxes, far be it from me to feel sorry. He did appear to have the most expensive suit of all of the—

Interjections.

Mr Kormos: Well, he did. That was some expensive suit.

Poor Paul Martin. I understand enough French to know when you're getting the stuffing kicked out of you in French, Madame Meilleur. My French was good enough to know that Paul Martin was taking a whole lot of body blows. So I encourage people at 8 o'clock—Global, CTV, CBC—

Mr Delaney: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I respectfully request that the member from Niagara Centre address the provincial level of government and the topic at hand.

Mr Kormos: Global, CTV and CBC Newsworld at 8 o'clock. Watch that leaders' debate. There's a whole lot of folks out there that are going to depend upon the leaders' debate to decide how to vote in this federal

election. All I know is that folks everywhere I've been down in Niagara and across Ontario are saying anybody but Paul Martin and the Liberals. And all I know is that folks are angry. I encourage them to stay angry, watch that debate, 8 o'clock, CTV, Global, CBC Newsworld.

1950

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): I'm pleased to speak to this bill, and it's fortunate for Mr Kormos that the bill has not yet passed, because the bill would require truth in advertising and full disclosure, so he would not have been able to make the statement about Mr Layton.

As I read this bill, what came to mind was that I recall over the last eight years we had a Red Tape Commission that was going to bring things all together, simplify and consolidate, make less paperwork and make it easier for the consumer. Actually, it didn't accomplish as much in eight years as this one bill is going to do in three readings. This, truly, for the first time brings it together.

Applause.

Mr Parsons: Applaud the minister for that. There's so many things, like the proposed cooling-off period for people who purchase certain items and require full disclosure. This is great.

I would like to focus in specifically, though, on the portion of the bill dealing with electricians. My oldest brother is an electrician and he's actually quite a bit smarter than me because he didn't go into politics. But as I watched—

Interjection.

Mr Parsons: He's right. I'm right. As I watched his career over the past few years, I've gotten a bigger and deeper appreciation of what's involved in providing electrical services. It is a very complex industry, a rapidly changing industry, and an industry that requires things to be done absolutely right—not nearly right but absolutely right. And so, as I see where municipalities have passed legislation to govern electrical firms, I applaud the minister for bringing it together because, quite frankly, it takes some expertise, that not all small municipalities would have, to develop the regulations. So I applaud that.

I also say to any young people who are watching this evening—and there probably aren't a lot, but if there are, I strongly urge you to consider a career in the skilled trades. There is a need for you, and it is a rewarding career. You cannot do better than pursue a career in that.

Mr Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): The member for Prince Edward-Hastings, thank you very much for the compliments about this bill, because essentially this is a bill from the last government. Its amendments to 24 different acts, all of which were in place prior to the change in government last October—I really appreciate the support that the member opposite offers to the previous government, the endorsement. It's wonderful that you would think that the previous government did such a great job. The minister acknowledged that Mr Hudak and Mr Runciman—and actually I started some of these reforms when I was minister. So I want to thank the member. In fact, the Red

Tape Commission did do some good work, because they brought some of these issues which are here before us today in front of the cabinet of Ontario yesterday.

We have an omnibus act here amending 24 different statutes in Ontario. This wasn't done with any kind of political panache or political intent. It was done by a group of individuals. The Ministry of Consumer and Business Services is made up of some wonderful, wonderful people who work in the civil service of Ontario and have worked there a long time. They deserve the bulk of the credit, along with the designated administrative authorities, for bringing forward to the government of the day the amendments needed in order to make our province more healthy, more economically vibrant, and they've done a great job. It's with the great direction of Tim Hudak and Bob Runciman that this bill came forward. Thanks very much, Bob.

The Acting Speaker: One of the government members has two minutes to reply.

Hon Mr Watson: I want to thank—I have so many predecessors in this chamber. Mr Sterling, Mr Runciman, Mr Kormos, Ms Churley and Mr Hudak are all former ministers. As John Kennedy once said, victory has a thousand fathers, and I certainly share the credit with my predecessors, as I do with the staff at CBS.

I thank the member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. It sounded like he was offering a marriage proposal. I didn't quite hear what he was talking about, but certainly we're going to deal with the issue that he's talked to me about on a number of occasions.

The member from Niagara Centre once again, unfortunately, didn't even talk about the bill, but I'm sure he's read the bill and I look forward to seeing the debate. I'm sure on June 28, the NDP will have another moral victory, with maybe a dozen seats or so.

The honourable member from Prince Edward-Hastings, one of the great, plainspoken speakers, talked about the "duct tape commission" of the previous government. This is a piece of legislation that is basically moving forward and bringing greater consumer protection to the people of Ontario.

To the member from Lanark-Carleton, certainly previous governments started the job, but the McGuinty government is finishing the job. We're very proud of this piece of legislation, and I encourage members to support it.

Finally, to all of the stakeholders who will be affected by this bill—because they too are instrumental. It's not just the public service; they play an important role. Our friend from the international brotherhood of electricians, as well as various groups from the real estate sector, travel agents, the travel industry, the motor vehicle dealers' associations across the province: They're all very supportive of this and are looking forward to its passage, hopefully in the near future.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Runciman: I appreciate the opportunity to participate in the debate on Bill 70. As Minister Watson pointed out, there are three former consumer ministers

sitting on this side of the House and it's quite unique, if not historic, that we're going to have three—

Hon James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism and Recreation): It's a revolving door in that ministry.

Mr Runciman: Yes, there's some question about job security there. I agree.

But when you look at three former ministers who are going to be participating in this debate on the opposition side and offering their insights, hopefully, I think it's quite unique. Regrettably, we have a reasonable viewing audience to the proceedings in this place on normal occasions, but this evening even those people who tend to tune in to the goings-on at Queen's Park in evening sessions like this are unlikely to be catching us; unless it's the opposition members, then they may want to do a little channel surfing. If Mr Martin is on, switch it over to see what's going on with the opposition members at Queen's Park. I can understand the rationale if that's the kind of decision people are making.

I want to compliment the whip—I shouldn't mention anybody who isn't here, but there's a pretty good complement of Liberal members in the House tonight, and I think that's praiseworthy. This may be because they're hiding out. They don't want to watch the debacle that's about to occur on CTV, Global and on the CBC, on Newsworld and the broader network. These are pretty dismal days for Liberals, both provincially and federally. But of course the provincial Liberals can take a great deal of credit for the sad state of affairs their federal cousins find themselves in.

Speaking to the bill—and I know the minister is anxiously awaiting my comments on the bill. I should have said at the outset, Mr Speaker, that I'm going to be sharing my time with the member from Lanark-Carleton.

I want to say as well that this is indeed the culmination of a lot of work done by the previous government. I think the minister has acknowledged that. But I would also like to add my compliments to the staff at the ministry. I was in the ministry and had the good fortune to be there on two occasions: very briefly in 1985, I had six weeks as the consumer minister during the time the NDP and Liberal accord—the bedwetters' accord as it's known unofficially—was pulled together; and then 14 years later, in 1999, I had the opportunity to go back into the ministry. I have to compliment—I'm sure Minister Watson is finding this out now—the outstanding staff working in the ministry, probably as good as you're going to see in the public service, really; the epitome of what we think of as dedicated, long-serving public servants.

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I want to put a special compliment on the record with respect to the deputy minister who served during my time, Sandra Lang, an outstanding individual who is probably at the top tier in terms of public servants. She's just an outstanding person. Sandy took retirement, and I understand the government has brought her back as a deputy in the new children's ministry. You haven't made too many good moves across there, but that's one of the

few good ones you've made. She is going to make a solid contribution, there's no question about it.

Mr Sterling: She re-retired. She only stayed for six months.

Mr Runciman: She only stayed for six months, I'm advised. I'm not sure whether that's the case or not. But she's a great person and we need more of her ilk in the public service in the province of Ontario.

I also want to reference a few things about the bill. I should put on the record off the top that we are in support. At the end of the day, whenever this does come for third reading, we'll be voting for it. We think it's good legislation, and not just because our past government had a major role to play in it. We think this is good legislation. It's needed legislation. It's going to accomplish a great deal.

We've had reference to the electrical area, and the president is here tonight, I understand. Certainly, I think there are a number of concerns that they've expressed over the years that are going to be addressed by this legislation. We think that's good and we hope that, indeed, this can be passed before we adjourn for the summer recess. It's certainly our intention and our hope to see that happen.

One of the reasons we're participating in this debate, of course, is because we are unhappy in the opposition, but I don't think we're alone in that. If you take a look at the polls that have come out recently in the last two to three weeks respecting the government's budget, the implications for taxpayers in this province, the questions surrounding promises made and promises broken and the level of unhappiness amongst Ontarians with respect to what's happened over the past few weeks in this building, I think that we have a responsibility on this side of the House to convey that frustration on the floor of this chamber.

There are very few ways in which we can do that. We can raise issues in question period, as you know, and hope that we're going to get substantive responses. But we've all seen that that's not the case. On a daily basis, we pose questions and, I think, concerns. We express them in the House, and we're getting non-answers from the ministers across the floor. That builds in frustration, not only here on this side of the chamber, but I think that spreads across the province and fuels cynicism, resentment and unhappiness. That's being reflected in current polls, when we see the Premier of the province in single digits in terms of people who believe in him and trust in him. I think that's unprecedented and it should be a cause for concern.

Again, that's why this bill is being debated extensively. We want to explore all of the pros and cons of virtually every line item here, primarily because there are limited options available to us in opposition to make sure that we get our positions on the record and convey the concerns of the public at large.

If the minister and others in his ranks are wondering—and I know that, to many of them, this is new; they haven't served in this Legislature in the past—about the

processes that are undertaken and the negotiations that occur between House leaders prior to the wrap-up of a session or through the duration of a session, this is part and parcel of all that.

We talk about committee hearings. The minister tabled legislation in this House the other day, BYOB legislation. Part of the problem, from our perspective, is not necessarily that we have a problem with the concept but with the lack of consultation and the fact that there are a whole range of people who have serious concerns about that initiative who were not given an opportunity to have input into it before it was tabled in this House.

Mr Kormos: Mothers Against Drunk Driving.

Mr Runciman: Mothers Against Drunk Driving is certainly a solid example, and the police associations and the hotel-restaurant associations—a whole range of people who may have liked to have input.

We felt the same about the budget. We've had the comments made that previous budgets did not, the last few times, have public hearings. But there's a significant and marked difference between those budgets, I would argue, and the budget that was tabled on May 18. The difference is significant changes in positions that resulted in the election of the Liberal government versus the positions that were presented to the public on May 18—dramatic changes in direction. In our view that merited—demanded—widespread consultation. A commitment was made in the platform as well that significant pieces of legislation would have that kind of widespread consultation before coming to this House for final reading. Again, that has not occurred.

I'm trying to lay the groundwork to have everyone in the House and viewers—limited as they may be this evening—have a better understanding and appreciation of why we're debating this legislation at length, even though I suspect—and I can't speak for the NDP—all three parties, with some reservations, are in general agreement with this legislation and feel we'd like to see it become law in a very timely way.

My friend from Grey raised an issue, and I don't want to forget it as I proceed here this evening. It is related to a responsibility that falls within the ministry of consumer and commercial relations, the marriage area, and the fact that legislation was passed by this House a year and a half ago, something like that, and, for reasons unknown, was never brought into law. The argument made at the time, I gather by one of my successors, was the development of regulation. It seems to me that this is the sort of thing where it's the will of this place, the will of this Legislature to move ahead with the creation of the office of marriage commissioner in the province of Ontario. And for whatever reasons, whether they're bureaucratic or whatever they may be—I would implore the minister to respect the will of this place and bring that initiative forward.

I find it passing strange—and I'm not taking a position on this pro or con; I don't want anyone to suggest I am. I was reading recently about, the shariah law, I think it is; I'm not sure what the correct pronunciation is—but with

respect to that proceeding and questions about training for people involved in arbitration and family disputes and so on, and the fact that there's no requirement whatsoever, even though the fact that can occur was mandated back in 1991, I gather. It must have been during the NDP government tenure. But the fact that it is there and is apparently going to occur, agree or disagree, and here we have a piece of legislation that was indeed endorsed by this House, and a year and a half later, going on two years, nothing has happened. Again, I urge the minister—this is a responsibility that falls under him—that he should ensure that does indeed come forward, and come forward in a timely way. Otherwise, I would describe it as contempt of this place, the fact that you're simply ignoring the will of the Legislature.

Hon Christopher Bentley (Minister of Labour): You had it for a year; we've had it for six months.

2010

Mr Runciman: Yes, we did. I agree with you, and I don't apologize for that. It is nice to see the Minister of Labour in the House this evening. He wasn't here the other night when we debated his legislation. His parliamentary assistant wasn't here either to address issues, which is truly unfortunate.

Mrs Carol Mitchell (Huron-Bruce): He was here, Bob. The parliamentary assistant was here.

Mr Runciman: Well, they didn't speak up if they were. I specifically asked a question.

Hon Mr Bentley: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: When we're talking about parliamentary traditions, when we're talking about respect for the rules of the House, one would have thought that the honourable member, who's been here a lot longer than I, would know that it is not in the traditions of this House to refer to someone's presence or absence. It should not be done. But what happens so often in this place is that those who know what should not be done often do it because they know they can get away with it. That is my point of order, Mr Speaker. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. The Minister of Labour is correct when he says that it is the tradition of this House that we don't refer to other members' absences in the present—

Mr Runciman: Yes, Mr Speaker. I respect that and I try to respect the rules of the House. We see some people abuse points of order, and we just saw a case in point here this evening with the Minister of Labour. But I would rebut his case with respect to the time I've been around here. It's been traditional, it has been a practice, to ensure that a minister and/or a parliamentary assistant is present during the debate of a bill that falls within the purview of that ministry. I'm advised there was a PA here.

Mrs Mitchell: He was here.

Mr Runciman: If there was, fine and dandy. They certainly didn't identify themselves, and there was no suggestion that there was anyone present that evening.

The Minister of Labour wants to stir the pot here this evening, I guess. If he wants to do that, that's fine and

dandy, but he's going to get it stirred right back, I would suggest to him, if that's the sort of thing he wants to raise in the House.

We've talked about marriage commissioners. I want to talk about another thing—again, I guess there can be some justifiable criticism with respect to the former government—and that's the Athletics Control Act, which falls under this bill. It's referenced in the bill, some of the changes. I'm going to throw a bouquet to the minister with respect to a study that I had initiated during my time in the ministry to take a look at professional boxing in the province of Ontario. I asked Jim Hunt, who's a very well known sports columnist, author and commentator, and Ralph Lean, a highly respected Toronto lawyer and a boxing fan, to take a look at the state of professional boxing in the province and report back with recommendations on how we could enhance professional boxing and the impact it could have on tourism, implications in a significant way. It's nice to see the Minister of Tourism here when I'm having an opportunity to talk to this. Mr Hunt and Mr Lean, I think, wrote an excellent report, some recommendations dealing with tax policy in a whole range of ways in which we can improve the environment for professional boxing, including enhancement of amateur boxing, which could again, I think, fall under the purview of tourism and develop excellent, world-class athletes who could compete in the Olympics in the future.

One of the recommendations they made dealing with the Athletics Control Act—and I'm not sure if the minister has had an opportunity to take a look at this, but one of the concerns they heard, talking to the professional boxing community, was the fact that it was the one individual who's head of the Athletics Control Act, responsible—Ken Hayashi, an outstanding individual—who would make decisions and there was no appeal process available if indeed he made a decision related to whatever it might be in terms of a boxing site or venue or the boxers involved. We certainly know there are health issues involved here. But the concern of the group, the task force, was that we should establish, like so many other jurisdictions have, a three-person boxing commission, so that Mr Hayashi's decisions could be appealed to this boxing commission, so that we would have that opportunity to make sure it wasn't simply an individual decision with no recourse available.

So I hope the minister will review that and take a look at moving ahead. I doubt that would require a legislative change; it may be a regulation or simply a policy change that he could initiate within the ministry.

I want to say, I had difficulty. Once Jim Hunt, Ralph Lean and I left the ministry, that report sat on a shelf for some time until Minister Watson indicated he had no difficulty with it being released publicly, and I want to thank him for that. I've done it on past occasions. I think it was especially important for me and for people like Jim Hunt and Ralph Lean, who contributed hundreds of hours to developing this report, researching and meeting with people. I thought it was an outstanding report and it was

only fair to them that they had some recognition. Whether this report goes anywhere or not—I hope it does, some of its recommendations. But at least I know Jim Hunt was here for the release, and Jim is getting up in years. He's a terrific gentleman and I know he appreciated the opportunity to explain the report and explain the recommendations. Once again, I want to thank Minister Watson for agreeing to that release and also posting the report on the ministry's Web site. Thank you very much.

There are a couple of other things we should talk about. The Theatres Act in some respects has always been a bit of a controversial area with respect to the Ontario Film Review Board. What the legislation is talking about is moving into the area of national standards so that we have a similar standard across the country with respect to a rating system for movies and videos. That does make sense. I guess the concern would be—and I'm not sure, and perhaps at some point the minister can explain this—how you arrive at a national consensus with respect to these kinds of standards. Is there some sort of body? I don't quite understand the implications of this. I know we've talked about it, how this is agreed upon, that we don't find a particular jurisdiction, that we sort of sink to the lowest level rather than rise to the highest level in terms of the kinds of standards that are set. So I would be curious, and hopefully the minister will have an opportunity during his responses to provide a more detailed explanation.

But I know over the years—and we saw this recently with a court decision related to the film review board. What was the case?

Mr Kormos: Glad Day Books.

Mr Runciman: Glad Day Books? Was that the case? I can't reference the specific case, but certainly there is an indication that the whole censorship issue and removing certain parts of films, rather than simply providing guidance to people—I think that's the argument, whether certain things should be available to the public on video or through movies and whether the whole question of censorship should apply versus simply informing the public as well as you can that a movie or a video is going to contain certain things that may be offensive.

I think part and parcel of the whole question of the current rating system, where they deal with age limits—whether someone under 14, or whatever the age limit might be, is restricted, or there are certain parental guidance issues. There's very little policing of that. In a way, it's a bit of a joke. I'm not sure how many charges have been laid over the past 10 years under those areas. I suspect none. There may be some exceptions, but the fact is that the ticket takers in the theatres themselves are people who are not really going to take that responsibility on their shoulders unless it's truly a blatant situation where someone's bringing in a seven-year-old, for example. You would hope that in those kinds of instances the person selling tickets or someone taking tickets at the check-in would act to make sure those children weren't allowed into those kinds of movies. But even in those

kinds of situations, I suspect that virtually nothing is happening and there's no policing there.

2020

When you take a look at it in that context, you can have these rules and guidelines, but in effect what impact are they having? I suspect the answer is virtually none. So perhaps we should look at simply doing a better job in terms of classifying films and then making sure that the consuming public, parents and others are warned if there are explicit scenes of violence, sexual scenes that could be offensive and a whole range of areas. I've gone up to the Ontario Film Review Board in years gone by and sat through some of the garbage that these people have to look at on a daily basis, and some of it is truly vile. I guess you can understand the concern among some elements of the public about even having that kind of material out there and accessible to people whom you may not wish to have access to it.

These are a whole range of pretty heavy duty issues, and if you can't police these things, if you can't effectively control it, what's the next best avenue of recourse? I think appropriate classification and a better investment in ensuring that the consuming public are aware of what's contained in a video or a film would go a long way to addressing many of those concerns.

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): Is that water?

Mr Runciman: Just water. That's all we can afford in this place.

I want to talk about a few other things too. There's a reference in here to public safety and I find that somewhat ironic, although it's related to the Electricity Act. I think my friend in the NDP is going to talk more extensively about the ESA, the public safety elements and some of the suggestions here regarding licensing. I won't get into that because that's not necessarily a concern we share, although after I listen to him this evening, perhaps we will. But I know that that is a concern of his.

This whole broad heading of public safety—and we see the Minister of Community Safety today second-guessing police officers who have to put their lives on the line, rushing into a situation where someone is reportedly attacking them with a 10-inch blade knife. The minister has the audacity to suggest they should have used a Taser gun in a situation like that. I find that totally incomprehensible and unforgivable and I think it is truly offensive to the men and women in blue who really have to face these very challenging situations. For someone to suggest that they could have handled it otherwise, for anyone in the government to talk about public safety, is disturbing. There's a whole series of legal questions surrounding his intervention in this, not to mention the special investigations unit in any criminal investigation that may arise. I would think the potential for any civil action has been dramatically increased as a result of Mr Kwinter sticking his nose where it should not have been stuck. In any event, it's happened, even if the Premier wants to ignore it, and we'll see what flows from that in the weeks and months to come.

I think the retesting requirements—again, my friend from Welland-Thorold may wish to speak to this—and

the costs of tradespersons are, again, issues that are not adequately addressed here. On this whole question of retesting, we think there should have been some consideration here related to grandparenting. That doesn't seem to be addressed here. Although it's unlikely it's going to happen at this stage of the game, we hope this is something that the minister may look at addressing, perhaps through some regulatory change or regulatory amendment that could look at that sort of issue.

I think when you look at the consolidation of the six core consumer protection laws into a single act, and the modernization of those statutes that weren't proclaimed or passed—the Motor Vehicle Dealers Act, the Real Estate and Business Brokers Act, the Travel Industry Act—this is positive updating in business sectors that represent some of the biggest-ticket purchases that most consumers in the province will ever make, whether you're talking about buying a home, a motor vehicle or travel. I know my friend talked a bit about travel and some of the government members talked about travel. Certainly that's another area that I think we could talk extensively about in terms of providing additional protection.

There is some additional protection built into the changes here. Again, during my time in the ministry, we did a review and made recommendations. I would encourage the minister to take a look at that report, which took a look the travel industry. I met with the federal travel ombudsman at the time, Bruce Hood. We required a federal ombudsman because certainly you can't—he's a federal candidate now and I feel sorry for him. He's running for the Liberal Party, and that's a challenge in Ontario at the moment. Bruce Hood's a nice guy. I think he wanted to do a good job.

Certainly the regulatory folks at the federal level were not doing the job. Whether it relates to Air Canada or to whomever, we've certainly seen a deterioration. Fortunately, we've seen some competition come into the airline sector across the country, but I think we need more competition if you want to see improvement. That's going to really drive improvement in the airline industry across this country.

My colleague from Lanark-Carleton wants to participate. I want to reiterate that we will be supporting this legislation when it comes to a vote. We would like to see it come to a vote in the very near future, but again, a lot of that depends on the government House leader and his willingness to recognize the concerns and desires of not just the opposition, but the people of Ontario.

Mr Sterling: During the interim, I did have an opportunity to go out and look at the debate. I want to say that I'm very proud of Stephen Harper as a result of that. He is putting forward a very calm—

Interjection.

Mr Sterling: Yes, I may have the opportunity to leave here and become a senator in Ottawa. I won't have to rely on anyone appointing me, either. Actually, one time I proposed a Senate here, but nobody took me up on that.

I remember the day I brought forward a proposal in this Legislature to abolish the Senate of Canada. My

colleague Mr Bradley, now the tourism minister, was another member. We were both in opposition at that time. It was 1990-95, and Mr Bradley really wanted to speak to it, but unfortunately one of his colleagues took all the time. I can remember his anger with regard to that because I think he agreed with me on that date.

At any rate, this act is—I don't know whether you call it an omnibus act or whatever it is, but it's an act amending 24 different statutes in the Ministry of Consumer and Business Services. It does tell people a little bit about the complexity of that particular ministry. Back when Mr Runciman, our elder statesman, and myself were ministers of that, we had the Liquor Control Board of Ontario under our wing. I did think that it was proper to move the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp from the Ministry of the Attorney General to the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, but I do question the move of taking the LCBO away from this ministry and into the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade. I say that for two reasons. Number one is that the institutional knowledge in the Ministry of Consumer and Business Services—

Hon Mr Bradley: You'd be a good chair.

2030

Mr Sterling: Try me on. Mr Bradley says that I would be a good chair and I just said, "Try me on."

The Ministry of Consumer and Business Services had tremendous institutional knowledge and worked very well with the Liquor Control Board of Ontario. I also believe that the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade has enough on its plate with regard to other matters, and that this minister, by being in charge of or responsible for the LCBO, gets a little bit of the element of not only being a representative of consumers, as he is the Minister of Consumer and Business Services, but he also gets first-hand the opportunity to really be involved in running a significant business in Ontario, and that's the LCBO. So I was a little sorry to see that move take place. And quite frankly, that particular agency is a very important one that deserves a lot of attention because, as you may know, our Canadian vintners sell about 40% or 45% of their product through the LCBO. It's really important. But I digress a little bit away from this bill.

I wanted to talk about this bill because there are a number of acts that are amended, and I'm just naming four of the 24: the Electricity Act, the Motor Vehicle Dealers Act, the Real Estate and Business Brokers Act and the Travel Industry Act. Perhaps the most significant amendment here is to the Travel Industry Act. That saves our travel agents from potential problems if Air Canada should ever go down and fail.

Back some time ago, I was involved with the ministry, I believe, at the time when Canada 3000 failed. At that point in time, it was necessary for the cabinet of Ontario to change the regulations to deal with the responsibility of the individual travel agent to deal with that failure. Up until that point in time, TICO, the Travel Industry Council of Ontario, ensured each consumer that he or she would receive payment back if, in fact, the end supplier

failed to supply the product. That's sort of the basis of it. But it only did that after the travel agent became bankrupt, insolvent and paid out all of what they would have in terms of assets; then TICO would come in behind them. We changed it with regard to Canada 3000, and I'm glad to see the government react to a potential problem with Air Canada. It's very important for the stability of our business community and residents that they have the opportunity to travel with Air Canada because it serves so many of our communities, and they provide the bulk of the coverage in terms of air travel in Ontario.

A lot of what the Ministry of Consumer and Business Service does now is done differently than was done eight or nine years ago. That's because we changed a lot of the way that business is done, or how business is managed in Ontario. In 1995 or 1996, we brought in Bill 54. Bill 54 was the first comprehensive piece of legislation dealing with designated administrative authorities. It brought into the fold automobile dealers, cemeteries, real estate industries and the travel industry, in terms of saying, "We in the government can't deal with the nitty-gritty of managing regulations in your industry, and we think that you in the travel industry, and people involved with the travel industry, consumers and consumer representatives, can deal with it better than the government can."

The automobile dealers have their own self-management organization. As a result of that, we have seen great improvements in things like car leasing arrangements, where they have agreed to have a common car lease, because it is so easy to misrepresent what the interest rate is if you compound it semi-annually, quarterly, monthly etc. As a result of that piece of legislation, Bill 54, brought in by the former government, I believe we have been able to protect the consumer to a greater degree in terms of dealing with automobile dealers. And now, in terms of cemeteries, we have finally, after I don't know, 30 or 35 years, whatever the number of years, got all of the segments of the bereavement sector together, and now the whole idea in terms of the bereavement sector makes more sense. We used to have some archaic rules and regulations that people who transported the remains of people from one place to the other could only do this, the people who were in the cemeteries could only do this—they couldn't sell headstones, certain people couldn't do this—and it really didn't make sense in terms of what happened.

As a result of saying to the bereavement sector, "Look, we the government think this doesn't make any sense to the consumer. Get together, iron this thing out, and come forward with some reasonable regulations, reasonable law, and we will look at them and put them forward," as a result, we have had significant good reform in that whole area, and I don't think there are too many disgruntled people, even in the industry, who are concerned about that.

The other industry that has benefited greatly from self-management is the real estate industry. I had a fair bit to do with that particular piece of legislation. I felt it was

necessary to introduce a greater degree of professionalism into the real estate sales people's and brokers' business. As a result of their taking it over, and the registration process, there is much more customer satisfaction with regard to the people who are dealing with the real estate business, and I believe that they are driving more rational, reasonable decisions in terms of disciplining those who step out of line.

This afternoon we were graced here at the Legislature by the greenhouse industry, who came to talk to members of the Legislature, down in the legislative dining room, about their particular industry. One of the matters which was raised with me some time ago, and was raised with me again today in the legislative dining room, was the whole problem with pressure boilers, which virtually every greenhouse has to use for its heating system. How do you do this? How do you have a pressure boiler without having a qualified stationary engineer on the job 24 hours a day to take care of that? Some of these operations are relatively small in terms of their employees and that kind of thing. So it was necessary to try to find a line between requiring a stationary engineer, which would be very expensive on a 24-hour basis, and to try to find a solution which would ensure the safety of that boiler, the workers around that boiler and any consumers who might come close to that boiler.

2040

When I was the minister, I went to the TSSA, which is the Technical Standards and Safety Authority, which was again another designated administrative authority. I said: "Look, as minister, I cannot take the status quo as it now stands. We have to have greater accountability with regard to the safety of these boilers. We can't just allow them to be uninspected so that they're sitting out there in the field or they're sitting there in an enclosure and nobody who is technically competent is dealing with that or there are no standards associated with that."

So I said to Margaret Kelch, who is the president of TSSA, a former deputy minister of long standing in the Ontario government before she became the president of the Technical Standards and Safety Association, "I demand that you give to us a better response to this particular problem," and I was pleased to learn today when I was talking to some people from the greenhouse industry that they have come to a solution which will provide adequate safety, good safety, in terms of these boilers but within some economic reality of the industry.

I bring all these examples forward because the way consumer and business services was operating prior to 1995 was very different than it operates today.

I also wanted to talk about one other designated administrative authority, and that's ONHWP, the Ontario New Home Warranty Program, which now has another name, Tarion or something like that. What they do, for those who wouldn't know, is that when you buy a new house, your builder charges an insurance premium that guarantees the buyer that they are getting a structurally sound house, and it's an insurance policy that lives on for various periods of time, depending upon what structural part you're talking about.

When I came to the ministry in 1995, I had heard on the campaign trail of a problem with certain plastic vents. These were vents that came off gas furnaces, and there was a real problem with carbon monoxide. I think people should know about the actions that ONHWP, which is now Tarion, took at that time, with me as the minister. It was something that was done in a room. I said to ONHWP, "Look, we have to guarantee that there's not going to be carbon monoxide leaking into these homes from these plastic vents," because there was some technical problem with them at that time.

I want to tell you, at that time ONHWP, which had been very well run and had, I believe, reserves of something like \$30 million or \$35 million, stepped up to the plate and said, "Mr Minister, if you ask us to do this, we will do it." I said, "I want every vent changed in every house in Ontario where this vent is." We believed that this is a problem of the manufacturer and the manufacturer can be sued and the money can be regained. But they stepped up to the plate and they wrote a cheque for \$8 million to replace all of these plastic vents in Ontario. They then went after the manufacturer and they actually recaptured most of that \$8 million, which I think is a double check mark for this particular administrative authority. I think it was a tremendous show of the success of being able to do this, being able to do it quickly, because I was concerned about time. Nobody had died of carbon monoxide, but you know carbon monoxide is an insidious gas that nobody can smell or tell is in the place.

I wanted to talk about all of those designated administrative authorities briefly. Some of this legislation amends some of the powers that are involved there, but I also want to say that there is forever a danger with regard to a designated administrative authority, because it's a balance. Designated administrative authorities are there for the consumer, and the problem you continually face as a minister, as a consumer etc, is that there is a balance in their decision-making, that they are not becoming protective and monopolistic about the services they are providing.

From time to time, I had to say to one of the designated administrative authorities—and I won't identify which—"Look, you're there for the consumer. Your first duty is to the consumer, and second is for you to be involved and ensure that there's an equal playing field with regard to the services you are providing to the consumer."

We have to be very careful with these agencies. You've got to keep your eye on them. You've got to be sure they are not gouging in terms of fees, nor are they providing protection for the people who are providing these kinds of services where that protection is unwarranted. You will find, Mr Minister, from time to time you will have other groups that will come forward and say, "We want to become a designated administrative authority." You want to be certain that they, in fact, have the consumer interest at heart, that they are not there to protect their industry, their profession etc.

I just wanted to put forward those particular thoughts tonight. I do want to acknowledge one other person who

was what I would call at the genesis of designated administrative authorities. He was a former ADM of the Ministry of Consumer and Business Services, and that was Art Daniels, who was one of the most enthusiastic persons I ever met with regard to any in the public service. Art did a great job in bringing those administrative authorities on stream and making them very successful.

The public accounts committee, which I chair—and I see some of the members are here—has been reviewing DAAs, designated administrative authorities. I think it was expressed by some of the members of the committee that this whole aspect that the DAAs must represent the consumer first and the interests of the industries second has to be continually remembered with regard to any of these particular sectors.

This act is quite thick; it has 84 pages in it. Some of the amendments might seem quite innocuous, but I can assure you that the words in these amendments are very important. They are important, for instance, from the aspect of giving officials the right to search a particular business, search a residence, demand documents and demand things of people. Therefore, they have to be carefully thought out and have to be very parsimoniously given to these particular officials.

The act is a conglomeration of a great deal of work, a great deal of thought, but this will not, of course, be the end of amendments to these things. Designated administrative authorities, consumer protection, the way business interrelates with other businesses, the way business relates to the people who work with them, the professions, the way we operate our business and consumer climate in the province will continually change and will continually need amendment and regulation.

2050

But it does take an ever-vigilant ministry to keep their eye on the ball, and I want to say, as Mr Runciman has said, that this ministry has done an excellent job of doing that. They have good interrelations with the public. I can remember them telling me that they used to get, I think it was, something like 10 million calls a year at the ministry, with regard to a whole range of ideas, and I must say they reacted in a very, very good way. These people in this ministry have their feet on the ground, and therefore I think in a lot of ways we can trust that these amendments, in general, are good for the consumers of Ontario and are fair to the people that they affect.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments? The member from Niagara Centre.

Mr Kormos: I listened carefully to Mr Sterling's comments, with only those interruptions wherein I went back to the lounge to watch the leadership debate, which came on at 8 o'clock and is on until 10. It's on Global, CTV and CBC Newsworld.

So notwithstanding that I am going to be speaking to this bill starting at around 9 o'clock, and I'm loath to ask people to do this, notwithstanding that I'm going to be on my feet for 30 minutes this evening, I encourage people to pick up the clicker, to switch the channel to Global,

CTV, and CBC Newsworld and watch the federal leadership debate. It will help you understand why the Liberals are in that downward spiral, why there's this haemorrhaging of support for Liberals across Canada, not just in Ontario. We understand what Dalton McGuinty and his government did with the budget and how that, of course, brought him down to 9% in the polls and has dragged Martin and the federal team of candidates with him.

You have people like Sue Whelan, out in southwestern Ontario way. Sue Whelan comes from great political stock; her father is Eugene Whelan. You've got Sue Whelan, a federal Liberal incumbent candidate, saying to Dalton McGuinty, "Dalton, apologize for breaking your promises." She's pleading with the Premier of Ontario to apologize for breaking promises that Liberals made in the election campaign, because, you see, Sue Whelan knows that she's going to wear the broken-promise label. I think they call it branding in the industry. She's worried that she's been branded now as broken promises, just like the provincial Liberals have. Poor Sue.

Mr Delaney: The member from Lanark-Carleton noted that some of these proposals began on the watch of the former government, and I say to the member opposite, this is indeed true, and we hope we can count on his support to get these changes—I hesitate to call them common sense amendments—passed into law.

One of these changes is a long overdue overhaul of Ontario's film classification system. The vast majority of feature films, video and DVD releases are fairly straightforward exercises. Surely, for example, a film classification of PG, for parental guidance, for the Harry Potter series done in British Columbia or New Brunswick is unlikely to vary in Ontario.

Bill 70 lays the groundwork for the adoption of a national film-rating system. This benefits Canadian film producers, distributors and exhibitors, in that the criteria are national and a rating in one province is acceptable by all. This means far fewer references that say "subject to classification." It tells producers very clearly what's in and what's out when they develop scripts and shoot scenes. It tells distributors and exhibitors what they can confidently schedule in their theatres, and how and where they should promote a film.

Ontario, of course, retains the right to apply its own ratings, but clearly this would involve only films in which there are extenuating circumstances. It's been eight years since the act governing film classification systems has been overhauled, and it's time for some routine maintenance.

In a debate update, it's looking like Martin by a solid decision. Those undecided voters are coming back to the government that balances their books, pays down their debt and gives them a caring, compassionate and all-embracing Canada.

Mr Murdoch: It's my pleasure again tonight to speak a little bit on Bill 70 and what's not in there. Mr Runciman mentioned that we don't have regulations in there for the marriage commissioners act, and I'd like to ex-

plain to the House what happened there. A year ago Christmas it was passed in this House. It was unanimously supported by the NDP, almost unanimously supported by the Liberals, and I think there were about 10 Conservative members who didn't vote for it. It went through. There is a bill there.

Interjections.

Mr Murdoch: I hear a few catcalls and that: "Well, you guys had it for a year. Why wasn't it done?" I want to tell you why it wasn't done: because we had an incapable, incompetent minister handling it in Minister Hudak. He shouldn't have been the minister. He was the minister, and that's unfortunate. He had his own agenda. He didn't want to do what the House wanted to do. This was passed in this House by all three parties, and he wouldn't do the job that he had to do as minister. He had a year to do it, and he didn't do it.

So, Minister, I'm depending on you to do this for us. There are two ways you can do it. You can bring a bill into this House that mirrors the bill that was passed or you can put regulations into that bill, because that bill stands passed in this House; it got royal assent. The regulations were never done because, as I say, we had an incapable minister looking after it, which was unfortunate. But those things happen.

I suggest that you probably will have some incapable ministers over there from time to time, but I don't believe the minister today is that way, and I believe he'll bring in some regulations so we can have marriage commissioners in this province. I'm leaving it in your hands to do that, because, as I say, it wasn't done here. I'd appreciate anything you do over the summer, and hopefully in the fall session you will have something done for us.

The Acting Speaker: We have time for one further question and comment.

Hon Mr Watson: I know there was a reason why I respected the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound for his frankness. He won't be disappointed. We're working on some provisions with respect to the issue he's talked about and hope to have some news that I'm sure he'll be pleased with in the next several months.

I thank the members from Lanark-Carleton and Leeds-Grenville as well for their comments. They speak with great experience and authority, having been minister in this ministry on two occasions for Mr Runciman and I think on two occasions—or was it just one?—for Mr Sterling.

This bill is something I'm particularly proud of because of the emphasis on consumer protection. Let me just give you a couple of quick points that I'm pleased with.

Extending cooling-off periods from the current five days to 10 days: Often people are pressured—you think particularly of time-shares—and perhaps make a decision in haste. They need that extra time, particularly senior citizens as we celebrate international Seniors' Month in the province of Ontario. They need that time to think about what they've done and to get out of an agreement. That's one thing I'm quite pleased with.

Also, increasing fines for people who contravene the laws with respect to dishonest activity is going to protect the reputation of Ontario businesses. They'll be increased to \$50,000 for individuals and \$250,000 for corporations, sending a very strong signal that if, in the province of Ontario, you try to rip off a consumer, you're going to pay the price for it.

I am very pleased with the support of the official opposition and I certainly look forward to the support of the NDP.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Lanark-Carleton has two minutes to reply.

Mr Sterling: Because I know most people are watching Stephen Harper embarrass Paul Martin with regard to the scandals and the lack of accountability at the federal level, I'm going to keep my remarks very, very brief.

2100

I do acknowledge that there wasn't one iota of criticism with regard to what either Mr Runciman or I said, and that, of course, is because we do support the bill. The genesis of the bill was with the government in the past. I look forward to working for the consumers, whether I am on the government benches or the opposition benches. It's important that these laws be kept up to date.

I want to extend to the minister our openness toward further amendment with regard to any consumer laws, as long as we are certain that the proper consultation has taken place. They do require a lot of work, a lot of consultation. This bill represents that in the past, and we will work to that in the future.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Kormos: As I indicated earlier—here it is 9 o'clock at night already. I've got an hour to do the lead-off. I'm only going to be able to do 30 minutes this evening, and I apologize.

Having said that, I admonish those people who might still be watching—surely the battery has died in the clicker. The problem now is that it's not a matter of just going up and turning the channel. With television sets, anything newer than 10 years old, there is no thing to turn the channel. I need the remote control for my TV set to change the channel. I wouldn't, for the life of me, know how to change the channel if I didn't have the remote control.

But I'm encouraging folks who are watching—and I appreciate that, over the course of the last couple of hours, the folks who might have been watching probably aren't any more, but I would exhort them to switch to CBC Newsworld, Global or CTV to watch the balance, the final hour, of the federal leaders' debate. We're awful proud of Jack Layton and the work he's been doing in this campaign across the province. I am confident that he's going to give Mr Martin the same drubbing tonight that he gave him en français last night.

I'm here with my colleague from Hamilton East, Andrea Horwath. I'm as mindful as anybody can be that we're debating Bill 70, but on Sunday I was over at St John the Baptist Hungarian Greek Catholic Church on Second Street in Welland. What was happening is that on

this past Sunday, St John the Baptist Hungarian Greek Catholic Church was having one of its feasts and we were saying hello to the new bishop of the Ukrainian Catholic Church, the Greek Catholic rite within the broader Catholic church. A newly ordained bishop was in Welland for the first time, Bishop Stephen Chmilar. He was a delightful, delightful person. I was so pleased to see him in Welland, so pleased to meet him and chat with him. He has a huge territory to cover, he really does. He covers basically all of eastern Canada, from the Manitoba border east. He has a rich background in western Canada with the Ukrainian Catholic Church there and is going to serve those Greek Catholic churches, their parishioners and their clergy well.

The reason I was reminded of the dinner at the St John the Baptist Hungarian Greek Catholic Church on Sunday—which was an outstanding dinner, as usual. It was a little warm. We were in the basement, but the place was packed, as it inevitably is, and not just people of the Hungarian Catholic, Greek Catholic, Ukrainian Catholic faith, but the Reverend Maria Papp was there from the Hungarian Presbyterian Church across the road. The level of ecumenism was profound.

What prompted me to recall that, of course, is Andrea Horwath being in the chamber with me this evening. There was a group of Hamiltonians at this dinner. They travel pretty regularly, as these people share each other's celebrations. They had a chance—or rather, I'm the one who had the chance and the privilege of saying, hello and howdy to them once again. But I want to tell you how specifically proud they were, as Hamiltonians, of having sent Andrea Horwath to the provincial Legislature, not just because she's proven herself in a mere matter of days to be an extremely capable member of this Parliament but because she's a Hungarian. She's one of theirs. She's a Magyar. So they were doubly proud to see Andrea Horwath sent to the Parliament by Hamiltonians.

I was just so pleased that these folks from Hamilton had a chance to celebrate with me their contribution to improving the quality of this Legislature. Did I tell you Father Deak was there, of course? Because Father Nicholas Deak, for whom I have profound regard, a great deal of affection, is the pastor at St John the Baptist Hungarian Greek Catholic Church. We go back a long way. He and his family are incredibly hard-working. Of course he, like so many others in this tradition, are worker-priests, which adds a special quality to it. It really does change the perspective.

I got the sense, I sort of picked up the enthusiasm of the minister around this bill. Look, I tell you, New Democrats are going to give the bill the support that it deserves. New Democrats are going to give this bill the support that it merits. And New Democrats are incredibly concerned that the minister would have presented this bill with such fervour and passion.

First, on the one hand, he says, "Oh, the bill's a nothing bill. The bill really doesn't do anything at all. It just tinkers and fine-tunes." Then, on the other hand, he purports to say that it's of such significance that he hopes for speedy passage. Right off the bat, I tell you that this

bill ought to go to committee, that this government would be delinquent, this government would be downright negligent, if it were to fail to send this bill to committee.

The bill is, in effect, an omnibus bill. Now, boy, did Liberals rail against omnibus bills when the Tories introduced them. And indeed, in short order, the Liberals, after having been elected, in addition to breaking almost every promise they made—the only promises that haven't been broken are the ones they haven't been tested on yet, right?

Again, the branding—I call it the Edselling of the Liberal Party and the Liberal government in Ontario, because there's a point. You're not old enough to remember, but I'm certainly old enough—and my friend over there is old enough—to remember the Edsel. My friend may well have driven an Edsel. At the end of the day, the Edsel was not a bad car at all. It really wasn't. It was an innovative, novel car, but it didn't matter. You couldn't sell one of those things for love nor money, because it got branded. It acquired this branding. The fix was in. It was over. Game over.

You say, "Liberal?" "Broken promise." You do that sort of word association stuff out there on the street. It's incredible. "Liberal?" "Broken promise." Immediate response. It's the first, immediate reaction. I know I have Liberal friends who are in the same position who say—I was watching the Liberal candidate down in Glanbrook; her signs, rather. It looks, quite frankly, like Dean Allison may be beating her in the first round of lawn signs, and I wish it were Dave Heatley, who is doing very well in his own right. Certainly in terms of the sign war, Dean Allison is winning, at least in Fenwick. But you see, she had signs that had her name on them, then had "Team Martin" with Paul Martin's portrait. She didn't just go for "Team Martin"; she's got "Team Martin" with the portrait. I mean, that candidate should have had her own portrait on these signs.

The new signs are out. I saw them on Saturday when I was in Fenwick, driving out there; as a matter of fact, at an event—it was at Dr Mayer's house—for Dave Heatley, who's the NDP candidate. I was down there for a backyard barbecue, down in Fenwick, in the new subdivision just north of the old Church Road. Dave Heatley is our candidate down there in the Glanbrook area. I saw the Liberal signs, the ones with the candidate's name on them and "Team Martin" and the huge picture of Paul Martin. She has given up on those, because the new signs just have her name. I'm not even sure if they say Liberal. Jim, do they say Liberal on the new signs? I don't know. The problem is, she is putting them up beside the Team Martin signs. If you are going to change direction in midstream, pull the Paul Martin portrait signs out. I appreciate that all these silk screens and stuff were made a long time ago, but heck, even then, what were people thinking? What were they thinking? This is incredible. The poor Fenwick-Glanbrook candidate there has got the Paul Martin sign. Now, it's not that she's—

The Acting Speaker: I have been listening intently to the presentation of the member from Niagara Centre and

I have to ask him: How does what he has said so far relate to the bill?

2110

Mr Kormos: Speaker, I'm glad you raised that issue. Just this evening, I was looking at Erskine May. As a matter of fact, I was like a kid at Christmas tearing open the package yesterday morning when the newest edition of Erskine May came. I knew it was coming but wasn't quite sure when it would get here. So here is the newest edition, the 23rd edition, 2004, of Erskine May.

I just happened to be looking at it. Honest, the book happened to open to this page. My eyes fell to the right-hand page. Sure enough, the book having fallen open to this page, it says, "Rules governing the contents of speeches," subheading "Relevance in debate," so I read on. I took great comfort from what I read, because it says, "A member must direct his speech to the question under discussion or to the motion or amendment he intends to move, or to a point of order. The precise relevance of an argument may not always be perceptible...."

I took great comfort from that observation by this learned author: "The precise relevance of an argument may not always be perceptible...." So I understand why you and maybe even other members may find themselves provoked to rise and do exactly what the learned authors of Erskine May say should be done, because the sentence is, "The precise relevance of an argument many not always be perceptible, but a member who wanders from the subject will be reminded by the Speaker that he must speak to the question," and you just did that.

The Acting Speaker: Then I'll remind the member that he must speak to the question.

Mr Kormos: Thank you kindly, Speaker. Now we're playing by the rules. You and I are reading from the same book. We're singing from the same page. And now this is going to make this work a lot easier than it would if somehow you were over there and I was over here. It's your job to remind me to speak to the question. That is your job, and I'm going to do everything I can to help you do it. It's my job, insofar as I understand it, to ensure that the precise relevance of an argument may not always be perceptible. Is that fair enough? Because it seems to me we've got this wonderful excerpt from Erskine May covered from the alpha to the omega. It's my job to ensure that the precise relevance isn't always perceptible, and it's your job to remind me to speak to the question. If we reversed the roles, heck, I would be the Speaker and you would be the member giving the speech. By the way, it happened to be page 433 of that 23rd edition, 2004.

When I realized this bill was going to be called tonight, I looked to my computer and to e-mail that had just come in, because if there was anything that had to be dealt with in my e-mail, I wanted to make sure I could deal with it during the dinner hour. Again, lo and behold, what's the e-mail on my computer this evening? It's an e-mail dated June 15. It's from Michael Parkin and it reads:

"Mr Kormos,

"In March of this year, my daughter sent in a change-of-name application. At that time we were told that it

would be completed within six months. We are now told that the time has increased to 54 weeks, that is ridiculous! Now she does not have her birth certificate as she starts university in the fall. As well, we are moving to Kingston so our address is changing and we will be unable to close our bank account here as the cheque we submitted has not been cashed. In March we were told that more staff was to be hired, apparently that was not true.

"I would appreciate any assistance that you can provide."

The perceptibility of the relevance may still be in doubt, but let me explain that this minister, the sponsor of this bill, is responsible for this young woman's dilemma, who when she submitted her change-of-name application was told it would take but six months and is now told it will take 54 weeks—that's two weeks in excess of a year. Understand that. And understand that this isn't a non-issue for this woman. A very important thing is happening here. She's got to go to university. She needs a birth certificate. She wants that birth certificate in the name she will have her name changed to. And the family is moving to Kingston, so the address is changing, but they can't close the bank account because the cheque they sent in still hasn't been cashed and they don't want it to bounce.

You know, I had concerns about the legislation. Then, when I discovered that it was Tory legislation, I understood why I would have had concerns. I would have had concerns if it were Liberal legislation, but then I also understand that the minister wasn't always a Liberal himself and indeed has a proud heritage as a Conservative supporter, perhaps even a member. Mind you, I understand why he has no discomfort being a Liberal, because one of the nice things about being a Liberal is that you don't always have to be a Liberal. The Liberals prove that over and over again. I suppose the other nice thing about being a Liberal is that you campaign like New Democrats and then you govern like Conservatives. I suppose the other observation, à la Jean Charest, is that becoming a Liberal while maintaining your Conservative values is no source of discomfort whatsoever.

But it is not just one person and one change-of-name application thrust into crisis, because after leaving my computer and having read that e-mail, I went to my fax machine. Here is the message that I had in my fax machine from my constituency office. This is the chronology of it, the course of events:

"I am writing to express my concern over the wait times for live-birth registrations and birth certificates.

"My son was born in October of 2003 and I registered his birth with the city of Welland by the end of the month. They completed his registration by November 25, 2003. When I registered the baby, I was told that I would receive notice that the live birth had been registered with the province.

"Even though I had not received the live-birth registration, I sent away for a birth certificate anyway. I have been waiting at least 10 weeks for this document, and it too has not arrived.

2120

"I have heard that both processes are behind and that the wait time is five months for each. If this is the case, then I should have received the live-birth registration at least a month ago.

"I was fortunate enough to have been able to travel using a travel letter from the city of Welland, but this document has since expired as it was only good for 180 days after the birth of my son.

"My concern is that the wait time for both of these important documents is unacceptable. At this time, I am unable to obtain a passport for my son, and I am unable to travel with him because I have no identification for him. I am also unable to start an RESP for him because I am unable to get a social insurance number without his birth certificate.

"Anything you can do to remedy this situation would be greatly appreciated."

There's a follow-up, after my office contacted your office, after my people spoke to yours, and after my staff received some words of comfort from yours and got back to the constituent with reassurances, relaying those reassurances that were given by your people. Unfortunately, it didn't work out the way your people said it would, because on June 7 this same woman wrote back:

"I still have not received anything from either my son's live-birth registration or his Ontario birth certificate. I returned your e-mail with his name and birth date on May 14. My son ... and I are flying to Calgary at the end of June, and the only documentation I have for him is his Ontario health card. The travel letter I had expired in April. What other documentation can I get in order to travel this month?"

Mr John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex): To Calgary?

Mr Kormos: "I am still very dissatisfied that I have no documentation for my son and he is eight months old, and all his papers were submitted within a week of his birth on October 15."

A heckle beside me says, "To Calgary?" Well, of course. Haven't you been on a plane lately? You can't fly to Sudbury without producing identification, and a neonate is unlikely to have a driver's licence, especially if he hasn't been able to get his birth certificate, notwithstanding effort after effort after effort.

Underneath that fax was this fax. Poor Peggy Dobrin in my office. She works hard. She, along with her colleagues in that constituency office, works hard. Years of Family Responsibility Office, family support plan frustration, and now the registrar's office—birth certificates, changes of name.

Here's another one: A family sent for its son's birth certificate on June 27, 2003—not 2004, because we're not at June 27, 2004, yet. The cheque was cashed and, by gosh, I've got a photocopy of their cancelled check. You've got their money. Somebody up there's got their money, but still no certificate. Now the response is that they, it, you have no record of the transaction.

Mr Murdoch: It's in the mail.

Mr Kormos: What are the world's three greatest lies? "Your money cheerfully refunded," "The cheque is in the mail," and, "Hi, I'm from the government and I'm here to help you."

Minister, there are real problems going on in your ministry that require immediate addressing. You've sent out, I think it was, the red-on-white one-page memo. Do you get those, Billy Murdoch? Do you get those memos from the minister? I think we're up to memo 15, aren't we? That's what I last noticed. It was double-digit for sure. Why don't we just subtitle them the Snafu Memos, just get right to the nitty-gritty? Because you haven't fixed it, you haven't solved the problem. You haven't added sufficient new staff. You haven't shortened the delays. Oh yes, you issue press releases saying you have, but in the real world, for real people, that's not the reality. Again, if these were just inconveniences for folks, it would be one thing, but this causes serious problems, practical problems, real problems.

I know that Joan Gravelle was watching earlier. That's Mike Gravelle's mom. She was watching earlier tonight. Whether she got tired of the stuff that was going on and switched over to watch that federal leadership debate on Global or on CTV or on CBC Newsworld could well be the case. Again, she was disappointed because her son Mike wasn't speaking tonight. I want her to know that the Liberal whip is simply just not warm to her son at all.

Mrs Gravelle, don't be angry with Michael, but I suggest you write a letter to either the Liberal House leader or the Liberal whip, saying that your son Michael, who's clever, who's well-spoken, who's quite frankly owed a huge debt by this government because his conduct in the House when they were members of opposition is in no small part responsible for them forming government—and what thanks does he get, huh, Mrs Gravelle? He deserves better treatment than what he's getting. I, for one, like your son. I presume you do too. I'm prepared to go to bat for him. I hope you will also.

But I say to the minister that to come here with tired, tattered, dusty Tory legislation isn't exactly a feather in your cap. Decisions like the Glad Day Books decision have made your Theatres Act amendments not specifically redundant, but the fact is, what we need is a whole new Theatres Act brought into this chamber. What you've done is just pulled this off the shelf.

I understand the competition. There's yourself. There's the young Minister of Labour. You've got a whole bunch of young Turks in the cabinet. Again—Mr Murdoch knows this—part of the way you prove your worth is by getting bills prioritized. But, Jeez, better to wait six more months and do a bill that's going to be specific, do a bill that's going to be more than obsolete the minute it's passed. You've got Theatres Act amendments that are redundant at this point because the court—and you have acquiesced to the court's position—has told you to get your act together and come up with a new Theatres Act.

I regret that I'm going to have to shut these comments down in a few moments' time. Next time this bill is

called, I will be taking the floor again and I'll complete my comments. I will address Bill 70 and the concerns that New Democrats have about it. I'll be making it clear once again that we expect this bill to go to committee. I'll be making it quite clear that we expect the minister to excise those portions of the bill which don't belong with Bill 70 any more, specifically amendments to the Theatres Act, because we need a whole new Theatres Act. The courts have told you so. Quite frankly, you can ignore the courts, but you know what the time frame is and you know what happens if you don't address the

court's concern: Then the whole statute's out the window.

We heard from Mr Murdoch about one of your predecessors, described by Mr Murdoch as incompetent. I don't want Mr Murdoch's next speech about an incompetent minister to be about you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. It being 9:30 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 pm.

The House adjourned at 2130.

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Algoma-Manitoulin	Brown, Michael A. (L)	Hamilton East /	Horwith, Andrea (ND)
Ancaster-Dundas-	McMeekin, Ted (L)	Hamilton-Est	
Flamborough-Aldershot		Hamilton Mountain	Bountrogianni, Hon / L'hon Marie (L)
Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford	Tascona, Joseph N. (PC) First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative		Minister of Children and Youth Services. Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse, ministre des Affaires civiles et de l'Immigration
Beaches-East York /	Prue, Michael (ND)	Hamilton West /	Marsales, Judy (L)
Beaches-York-Est		Hamilton-Ouest	
Bramalea-Gore-Malton-	Kular, Kuldip (L)	Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and	Dombrowsky, Hon / L'hon Leona (L)
Springdale		Addington	Minister of the Environment / ministre de l'Environnement
Brampton Centre /	Jeffrey, Linda (L)	Huron-Bruce	Mitchell, Carol (L)
Brampton-Centre		Kenora-Rainy River	Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Brampton West-Mississauga /	Dhillon, Vic (L)		Gerretsen, Hon / L'hon John (L)
Brampton-Ouest-Mississauga		Kingston and the Islands /	Minister of Municipal Affairs and
Brant	Levac, Dave (L)	Kingston et les îles	Housing, ministre responsible for seniors / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement, ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)		Milloy, John (L)
Burlington	Jackson, Cameron (PC)	Kitchener Centre /	
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Kitchener-Centre	Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)
Chatham-Kent Essex	Hoy, Pat (L)	Kitchener-Waterloo	Van Bommel, Maria (L)
Davenport	Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	Sterling, Norman W. (PC)
Don Valley East /	Caplan, Hon / L'hon David (L)	Leeds-Grenville	Runciman, Robert W. (PC)
Don Valley-Est	Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal. Deputy House Leader / ministre du Renouvellement de l'infrastructure publique, leader parlementaire adjoint	London North Centre /	Matthews, Deborah (L)
Don Valley West /	Wynne, Kathleen O. (L)	London-Centre-Nord	
Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey	Eves, Ernie (PC) Leader of the opposition / chef de l'opposition	London West /	Bentley, Hon / L'hon Christopher (L)
Durham	O'Toole, John (PC)	London-Ouest	Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail
Eglinton-Lawrence	Colle, Mike (L)	London-Fanshawe	Ramal, Khalil (L)
Elgin-Middlesex-London	Peters, Hon / L'hon Steve (L)	Markham	Wong, Tony C. (L)
	Minister of Agriculture and Food / ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation	Mississauga Centre /	Takhar, Hon / L'hon Harinder S. (L)
Erie-Lincoln	Hudak, Tim (PC)	Mississauga-Centre	Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports
Essex	Crozier, Bruce (L) Deputy Speaker, Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Vice-Président, Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative	Mississauga East /	Fonseca, Peter (L)
	Cansfield, Donna H. (L)	Mississauga-Est	
Etobicoke Centre /		Mississauga South /	Peterson, Tim (L)
Etobicoke-Centre		Mississauga-Sud	
Etobicoke North /	Qaadri, Shafiq (L)	Mississauga West /	Delaney, Bob (L)
Etobicoke-Nord		Mississauga-Ouest	
Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Broten, Laurel C. (L)	Nepean-Carleton	Baird, John R. (PC)
Glengarry-Prescott-Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Niagara Centre /	Kormos, Peter (ND)
Guelph-Wellington	Sandals, Liz (L)	Niagara-Centre	
Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant	Barrett, Toby (PC)	Niagara Falls	Craiton, Kim (L)
Haliburton-Victoria-Brock	Scott, Laurie (PC)	Nickel Belt	Martel, Shelley (ND)
Halton	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Nipissing	Smith, Monique M. (L)
		Northumberland	Rinaldi, Lou (L)
		Oak Ridges	Klees, Frank (PC)

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Oakville	Flynn, Kevin Daniel (L)	Stoney Creek	Mossop, Jennifer F. (L)
Oshawa	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Stormont-Dundas- Charlottenburgh	Brownell, Jim (L)
Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Patten, Richard (L)	Sudbury	Bartolucci, Hon / L'hon Rick (L) Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	McGuinty, Hon / L'hon Dalton (L) Premier and President of the Executive Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif, ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales	Thornhill	Racco, Mario G. (L)
Ottawa West-Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest-Nepean	Watson, Hon / L'hon Jim (L) Minister of Consumer and Business Services / ministre des Services aux consommateurs et aux entreprises	Thunder Bay-Atikokan	Mauro, Bill (L)
Ottawa-Orléans	McNeely, Phil (L)	Thunder Bay-Superior	Gravelle, Michael (L)
Ottawa-Vanier	Meilleur, Hon / L'hon Madeleine (L) Minister of Culture, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre de la Culture, ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones	North / Thunder Bay-Superior- Nord	Ramsay, Hon / L'hon David (L) Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles
Oxford	Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Timiskaming-Cochrane	Bisson, Gilles (ND)
Parkdale-High Park	Kennedy, Hon / L'hon Gerard (L) Minister of Education / ministre de l'Éducation	Timmins-James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	Smitherman, Hon / L'hon George (L) Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Parry Sound-Muskoka	Miller, Norm (PC)	Toronto Centre-Rosedale / Toronto-Centre-Rosedale	Churley, Marilyn (ND)
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Peterborough	Leal, Jeff (L)	Trinity-Spadina	Sorbara, Hon / L'hon Greg (L) Minister of Finance / ministre des Finances
Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge	Arthurs, Wayne (L)	Vaughan-King-Aurora	Arnott, Ted (PC) First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Prince Edward-Hastings	Parsons, Ernie (L)	Waterloo-Wellington	Flaherty, Jim (PC)
Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	Yakabuski, John (PC)	Whitby-Ajax	Zimmer, David (L)
Simia-Lambton	Di Cocco, Caroline (L)	Willowdale	Pupatello, Hon / L'hon Sandra (L) Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Sault Ste Marie	Oraziotti, David (L)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Duncan, Hon / L'hon Dwight (L) Minister of Energy, Chair of Cabinet, Government House Leader / ministre de l'Énergie, président du Conseil des ministres, leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Duguid, Brad (L)	Windsor-St Clair	Kwinter, Hon / L'hon Monte (L) Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Scarborough East / Scarborough-Est	Chambers, Hon / L'hon Mary Anne V. (L) Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités	York Centre / York-Centre	Munro, Julia (PC)
Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	Berardinetti, Lorenzo (L)	York North / York-Nord	Cordiano, Hon / L'hon Joseph (L) Minister of Economic Development and Trade / ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Scarborough-Agincourt	Phillips, Hon / L'hon Gerry (L) Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement	York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston	Sergio, Mario (L)
Scarborough-Rouge River	Curling, Hon / L'hon Alvin (L) Speaker / Président	York West / York-Ouest	
Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Dunlop, Garfield (PC)		
Simcoe-Grey	Wilson, Jim (PC)		
St Catharines	Bradley, Hon / L'hon James J. (L) Minister of Tourism and Recreation / ministre du Tourisme et des Loisirs		
St Paul's	Bryant, Hon / L'hon Michael (L) Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones, ministre responsable du Renouveau démocratique		

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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CONTENTS

Tuesday 15 June 2004

SECOND READINGS

Ministry of Consumer and Business Services Statute Law Amendment Act, 2004, Bill 70, <i>Mr Watson</i>	
Mr Watson.....	2917, 2926, 2934
Mr Delaney.....	2920, 2933
Mr Racco.....	2921
Mr Ramal	2922
Mr Sergio	2923
Mr Murdoch.....	2925, 2933
Mr Kormos.....	2925, 2933, 2934
Mr Parsons	2926
Mr Sterling.....	2926, 2930, 2934
Mr Runciman	2926
Debate deemed adjourned	2938

TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Mardi 15 juin 2004

DEUXIÈME LECTURE

Loi de 2004 modifiant des lois en ce qui concerne le ministère des Services aux consommateurs et aux entreprises, projet de loi 70, <i>M. Watson</i>	
M. Watson.....	2917
Débat présumé ajourné.....	2938



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First Session, 38th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 38^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Wednesday 16 June 2004

Mercredi 16 juin 2004



Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

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Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 16 June 2004

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 16 juin 2004

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

JASSEN CULLIMORE

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant):

Every hockey player dreams of becoming a Bobby Hull, a Mark Messier or a Wayne Gretzky and taking to the ice in the Saddledome, the ACC or the St Pete Times Forum. For Simcoe native and Tampa Bay Lightning defence-man Jassen Cullimore, that dream has been realized.

On June 7, while much of Canada was fired up about the Calgary Flames playing in game seven of the Stanley Cup finals, many of my constituents were cheering on Tampa Bay and Cullimore, as he manned the Lightning blue line. Despite a storm of activity in the dying seconds of the game, Cullimore and his team were able to clinch a 2-1 win and, as a result, the Stanley Cup will be returning again to my riding. The return visit follows its arrival three summers ago on the shoulders of Norfolk county native and Avalanche star Robbie Blake. He lives just a mile up the road from Jassen.

Championship hockey players are not unique to my riding. I think of locals Red Kelly, Chico Maki and Rick Walmsley, all of whom have had their names engraved on the cup. On the women's side, Hagersville's Becky Kellar has been playing for Team Canada for several years. She competed in the 1998 Olympics and helped bring home the gold in 2002 from Salt Lake City.

So to Jassen and the rest of the Tampa Bay Lightning crew, congratulations. Jassen, we look forward to seeing you and NHL's most coveted prize.

DAVID COOK AND TERRY BUTT

Mr Tim Peterson (Mississauga South): I rise today to recognize two outstanding individuals from Mississauga South: Mr Dave Cook and Mr Terry Butt. Mr Dave Cook has written, and Mr Butt has financed, a book about the history of Applewood Acres, which is in the northeast corner of Mississauga South. In Mr Cook's book, titled *Apple Blossoms and Satellite Dishes*, you can read how Applewood Acres was given development approval by Premier Leslie Frost.

Some of the historic people who lived in Applewood Acres include Buffalo Bill Cody's father and grandfather and Colonel Harland Sanders.

In Mr Cook's book, he will tell you the story of how William Grenville Davis, the 35th Premier of Ontario, changed his name to Bill Davis so he could appear first on the ballot. That was a decisive part of his first election victory.

Mr Cook was able to give free copies of his book to all residents of Applewood Acres, thanks to Mr Terry Butt. As former councillors in Mississauga, both Mr Cook and Mr Butt have shown their passion and dedication to their community, and now have enshrined it for all to read about.

I hope you will join me in congratulating Mr Cook on the tremendous work he has done in writing about this very important time in the history of Mississauga South and of Ontario, and to Mr Butt for sponsoring him. Will they please rise in the east gallery to be recognized.

RELAY FOR LIFE

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): It was my privilege to attend the first Relay for Life cancer research fundraising event held in Bracebridge, in my beautiful riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka, last Friday evening. Such events are organized by the Canadian Cancer Society as a celebration of survival and a tribute to the lives of loved ones. Approximately 300 people were present at the fairgrounds in Bracebridge, including 160 participants, volunteers and entertainers, for the 12-hour relay.

The weather was beautiful and the enthusiasm of those who participated, both young and old, was exceptional. The survivors' victory lap saw 39 cancer survivors walk the first lap of the relay in recognition and celebration of their courage and struggle with cancer. Another highlight of the evening was the luminary ceremony, in which candles were lit and placed around the track in memory of a loved one or in honour of a cancer survivor.

The event was a massive success, having raised \$39,000 in this inaugural year. This is a true reflection of the hard work and commitment of all those who participated, volunteered and provided their financial support. To all of them, I send my most sincere thanks. In particular, I would like to thank the enthusiastic organizing committee, chaired by Tina Plavinskis; the many sponsors, including Dura Automotive Systems and Pride of Muskoka Marina; and the Bracebridge OPP for their participation by shaving their heads in the Cops For Cancer event.

We all know someone who has been touched by this disease. It is events like this that give us hope that the day

will come when cancer will be beaten. I extend my warmest congratulations to all involved. I look forward to the second annual Relay for Life next year.

JACK McCLELLAND

Ms Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): I rise today on a sad day for Canadian publishing and culture. On Monday, our country lost a legend in Jack McClelland, who passed away at the age of 81. Jack was born in Toronto, attended U of T and served in the Royal Canadian Navy. He joined the firm of his father, McClelland and Stewart, a Canadian publishing firm, in 1946, and became president in 1961.

Over the next 20 years, Jack McClelland built M&S, as we lovingly know it, into the most significant Canadian publisher in the business. The house publishes countless Canadian literary giants, including Farley Mowat, Peter Newman, Pierre Berton, Margaret Atwood and Margaret Laurence, to name but a few.

Mr McClelland had a keen eye for publicity and was a great promoter of Canadian literature in Canada and around the world. One of his most notorious moments was when he marched toga-clad down Yonge Street to promote Sylvia Fraser's novel *The Emperor's Virgin*.

He was, to say the least, a legend. He was named a Companion of the Order of Canada in 2001 and held 11 honorary degrees for his contribution to Canadian literature. He has been declared the "father of Canadian literature" and has been described as being instrumental in creating "the whole existence of Canadian literature."

Today I rise in respect of a legend. I hope that we as Canadians and as Ontarians will remember that Jack McClelland was such a contributor to our culture. I thank him and thank his family for his contributions.

1340

HEALTH SERVICES

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leeds-Grenville): I want to take a few moments to discuss serious constituent concerns in my riding of Leeds-Grenville related to the McGuinty Liberal government's attack on Ontario's health care system through the delisting of chiropractic, optometry and physiotherapy services. This ill-thought-out decision is yet another direct violation of a Liberal campaign promise. Rather than providing reinvestment dollars for health care, it will ultimately cost the provincial treasury more and will inflict needless pain on thousands of low- and middle-income Ontarians, especially seniors on fixed incomes.

One of the many seniors who contacted me is Evelyn Pelton of Brockville. For Evelyn, her chiropractic treatments are an essential part of the health care system. She requires periodic treatments to restore mobility in her neck, and the chiropractic care she receives provides relief and doesn't require more expensive alternatives.

Evelyn is just one of thousands of Ontarians affected by the McGuinty Liberals' betrayal of promises and their pay-more-for-less approach to health care. I urge the

Liberal government to reconsider this wrong-headed and short-sighted decision, and restore funding to chiropractic, optometry and physiotherapy services in the province of Ontario.

HEADWAY HOMES (NIAGARA) INC

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): The goal of Headway Homes (Niagara) is to provide a model long-term home with appropriate services for severely brain-injured persons who are identified as slow to recover. There are currently no community-based services for these persons.

They formed a board of directors in June 1995 and since then have been meeting and discussing their project proposal with the central south regional office of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and the Niagara District Health Council. At the request of the central south regional office, they prepared several proposals and a business plan, but they continue to wait and wait for approval for funding to build the first Headway Home in Niagara.

They understand and they've been told that a significant barrier to funding is not only financial but policy-related. In order to move the needed project forward, the current policy preventing 24-hour nursing care in community-based settings must be revisited. They call upon this government—I join them in calling upon this government—to take the necessary steps to correct this policy and open the door to more effective services for a unique group of individuals who are slow to recover from severe brain injury.

I have hundreds of signed letters from people in communities across Niagara who express their concern for the lack of residential services for adults who are slow to recover from severe brain injury. I urge this government to respond. I insist that this government respond promptly to the creative, cost-effective and indeed humane and socially progressive proposal of Headway Homes, so that they can move ahead with their plans to care for those very important people in our communities.

EDUCATION

Ms Laurel C. Broten (Etobicoke-Lakeshore): I would like to rise today to point out a visitor in the gallery. My nephew Christian Giansante is here in the legislative gallery today. Christian is six years old and just about to complete the first grade.

Last fall, when we were engaged in the election, one issue in particular was repeated thousands of times at the doorsteps across Etobicoke-Lakeshore. The public had lost faith in the public education system, and the Tories had turned it into a political football. They were looking for a strong commitment from our party to rebuild our fractured educational infrastructure.

For years before the election and ever since our government has been elected, I have been meeting with parents and education experts who have been saying the

same thing: The most effective way to turn our system around and guarantee positive long-term results in education is to give children a strong start in public school.

Our budget has answered that challenge. We told the people of Ontario that class sizes from junior kindergarten to the third grade would be capped at 20, and we have made the necessary investment to ensure these kids get the start they need to succeed in our public schools.

The Tories gambled and lost with public education. I can't imagine what they must have been thinking when they purposely set out to create a crisis in the system so they would get credit for solving it. Luckily for the children such as Christian, they are no longer at the controls. When Christian enters second grade next fall, it will be in a public system that is once again striving for excellence.

FEDERAL ELECTION

Ms Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West): In the federal leaders' debate last night, Stephen Harper confirmed that his plan for Canada is to recycle failed Ontario Tory ideas. What you might not know is that he is recycling failed Ontario Tories.

Looking at the names of candidates for Stephen Harper's Conservatives in the federal election, I came across a few that struck a chord with me and obviously struck a chord with Ontarians recently.

One candidate, as education minister under Mike Harris, made drastic cuts that led to the textbook shortages, crowded classes and decrepit buildings that were hallmarks of their education agenda. That same candidate, as health minister under Mike Harris, closed 36 hospitals, leading to the long waiting lists, crowded emergency rooms and nursing shortages that patients struggle with every day and that we will have to reverse. This same candidate, as Management Board chair under Mike Harris, slashed the environment ministry budget in half and fired one third of the staff, directly contributing to the Walkerton disaster, according to the public inquiry.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): The member from Renfrew is not in his seat.

Ms Wynne: That Conservative Party candidate is David Johnson, running for Stephen Harper in Don Valley East.

Another one who caught my eye was the member who was known to have paid his press secretary \$300,000 a year. That was Tony Clement.

We're repairing the damage that these members did when they were members of the Ontario government. Let's not give them another crack at government in this country.

MEMBER'S COMMENTS

Mr John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex): It was an amazing night last night as we were debating Bill 70, because our good friend the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound stated the obvious: that his government had

incompetent ministers. In his own words, "We had an incapable, incompetent minister handling it in Minister Hudak. He shouldn't have been the minister. He was the minister, and that's unfortunate. He had his own agenda."

I wonder if the former minister, the member for Erie-Lincoln, was incapable and incompetent, but what was his agenda? I recall that under his tenure hundreds of birth certificates were lost and he didn't tell anyone for months. Afterwards, he told the Toronto Sun, "We've got to do a better job." Well, no kidding.

Under the Tories, our schools were crumbling, cancer patients were waiting weeks and months for therapy, the former government was flip-flopping daily on the energy sector, and the environment ministry was slashed by 40%, which led to the tragedy in Walkerton. Under the Tories, Ontario was left with a \$6.2-billion hidden deficit, a provincial debt increased by \$25 billion under their term that our children and grandchildren will be paying off for years, and a decimated infrastructure.

I think Mr Murdoch is absolutely right. When he talks about the former government's incompetence, it seems that not all is warm and fuzzy in the opposition's caucus.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the report on intended appointments dated June 16, 2004, of the standing committee on government agencies. Pursuant to standing order 106(e)9, the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES

Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington): Pursuant to standing orders 59(a) and 60(a), I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on estimates on the estimates selected and not selected by the standing committee for consideration of the House.

Clerk at the Table (Ms Lisa Freedman): The standing committee on estimates presents the committee's report as follows:

Pursuant to standing order 59, your committee has selected the estimates 2004-05 of the following ministries and offices for consideration:

Ministry of Finance: 7 hours, 30 minutes;

Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care: 7 hours, 30 minutes;

Ministry of Energy: 7 hours—

Interjections: Dispense.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Dispense? Dispensed.

Pursuant to standing order 60(b), the report of the committee is deemed to be received and the estimates of

the ministries and offices named therein as not being selected for consideration by the committee are deemed to be concurred in.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Mr Tony C. Wong (Markham): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on regulations and private bills and move its adoption.

Clerk at the Table (Ms Lisa Freedman): Mr Wong from the standing committee on regulations and private bills presents the committee's report as follows, and moves its adoption:

Your committee begs to report the following bills without amendment:

Bill Pr5, An Act respecting Conrad Grebel University College

Bill Pr6, An Act respecting Redeemer University College.

Your committee further recommends that the fees and the actual costs of printing at all stages be remitted on Bill Pr6, An Act respecting Redeemer University College.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? No further actions are required on your part—or no further actions are required on my part. Got that.

1350

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

ASIAN LONGHORN BEETLE CONFINEMENT ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 SUR LA LIMITATION DE LA PROPAGATION DU CAPRICORNE D'ASIE

Mr Tascona moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 102, An Act to limit the spread of the Asian longhorn beetle / Projet de loi 102, Loi visant à limiter la propagation du capricorne d'Asie.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Tascona?

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): The intent of the bill is to prohibit persons from transporting firewood infested with the Asian longhorn beetle, and creates an offence for doing so.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I believe we have unanimous

consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Do we have unanimous consent? Agreed.

Hon Mr Duncan: I move that, pursuant to standing order 96(g), notice be waived for ballot item 27.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I move that, pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 till 9:30 pm on Wednesday, June 16, 2004, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1353 to 1358.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour will stand one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Dombrowsky, Leona	Peterson, Tim
Bartolucci, Rick	Duguid, Brad	Phillips, Gerry
Bentley, Christopher	Duncan, Dwight	Pupatello, Sandra
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Qaadri, Shafiq
Bountrogianni, Marie	Gerretsen, John	Ramal, Khalil
Bradley, James J.	Gravelle, Michael	Rinaldi, Lou
Broten, Laurel C.	Hoy, Pat	Ruprecht, Tony
Brown, Michael A.	Kwinter, Monte	Sandals, Liz
Brownell, Jim	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Sergio, Mario
Bryant, Michael	Leal, Jeff	Smith, Monique
Caplan, David	Mauro, Bill	Smitherman, George
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	McMeekin, Ted	Takhar, Harinder S.
Colle, Mike	McNeely, Phil	Van Bommel, Maria
Cordiano, Joseph	Meilleur, Madeleine	Watson, Jim
Craitor, Kim	Milloy, John	Wilkinson, John
Delaney, Bob	Mitchell, Carol	Wong, Tony C.
Dhillon, Vic	Oraziotti, David	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Di Cocco, Caroline	Peters, Steve	Zimmer, David

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will stand one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Jackson, Cameron	Prue, Michael
Barrett, Toby	Kormos, Peter	Runciman, Robert W.
Bisson, Gilles	Marchese, Rosario	Tascona, Joseph N.
Dunlop, Garfield	Miller, Norm	Wilson, Jim
Hardeman, Ernie	Murdoch, Bill	Witmer, Elizabeth
Horwath, Andrea	O'Toole, John	Yakabuski, John

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 54; the nays are 18.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

1400

VISITORS

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Page Jessica Guthrie from Welland South in Welland has visiting her today her parents Joe and Debbie Guthrie. Her three brothers were left behind.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): That's not a point of order, but we welcome them.

ORAL QUESTIONS

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mrs Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): My question is to the Minister of Health. On May 19 your Minister of Finance, during his budget speech, made the commitment to invest in public health, and that it would increase immediately. He also said your government would increase the province's share of public health funding to 75%. I was very surprised, in reviewing the expenditure estimates that were tabled before this House yesterday, to discover, when I took a look at the vote item for public health, that it had been reduced by half a billion dollars. I would say to you, Minister, how can you justify this cut to public health?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I think the honourable member is on slightly interesting ground, as it's her legacy as a member of a government that actually cut public health. The estimates are very clear; that is, they demonstrate that there is a significant increase in funding for the provision of public health services in this province, but it's not reflected exactly in the estimates for two reasons.

First, there are some transfers out of the Ministry of Health into the Ministry of Children's Services that are in effect in that estimate's line, but more importantly there was a very significant expenditure related to one-time initiatives for SARS that are not repeated in this fiscal year. Overall, with respect to public health funding, there are eight very distinct areas in our budget where public health will be advantaged as a result of the commitments we've made in this year's budget.

Mrs Witmer: It certainly looks to me like there are more shell games being played by this government. I would remind the minister that when we were in office, we increased public health funding between 1998 and 2002 by 43%, both at the municipal and the provincial level. However, I would say, if I take a look at the estimates and look at the programs that are there for Ontarians infected with HIV, I see that we spent \$31 million on AIDS prevention and treatment assistance, HIV and the Ontario HIV Treatment Network. If I take a look at your estimates, you have actually cut the public health programs and services for HIV and for AIDS-infected patients. I ask you, how can you justify what appears to

be a cut of over \$23 million for these vulnerable Ontarians?

Hon Mr Smitherman: There's not much I can do for an honourable member who continues to stick with the script she wrote before the first answer. First off, you've got a lot of revisionist history going on. You like to pretend you weren't the government from 1995 until 1998 and that there weren't consequences related to the decisions you made then, like the arbitrary downloading of more of the responsibility for public health on to the tax base at the municipal level—first and foremost. But the facts are very clear here. When you remove the \$589 million that was in the public health line item from last year which was one-time funding related to SARS, what's absolutely, abundantly clear is that this government, in our first budget, is increasing public health expenditures by \$190 million, for increases in eight very distinct areas. And any shell game that you see is purely a shell game that is a figment of your imagination, but understandable given the fact that that's the way you operated for so many years.

Mrs Witmer: Talk about shell games; this minister stood up in this House and pretended that they were providing the funding for the immunization programs for children, when he knew full well it was the federal funding that he was counting on. It had nothing to do—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order.

Mrs Witmer: What you have done is, you made a commitment to health care; you are investing it in sewers. You're using the federal money to pay for the immunization program. And if I take a look at your public health commitment, as the critic for women's issues, I find that you have cut \$3 million from the Ontario breast cancer screening program. This at a time when we know there is a need to invest in breast cancer screening. Are you going to immediately restore the funding for this program?

Hon Mr Smitherman: What is astonishing about this honourable member is that she served in cabinet for years and years, and still, through all of that experience, doesn't seem to have come to understand that one-time federal money for immunization does not sustain immunization on an ongoing basis. What you have in this government, as a result of the commitments that we made during the election, is the implementation of an immunization strategy for our children, not just for this year and not just for next year, when there are federal dollars available, but a program that will be available for Ontario forever. This is an increase in immunization, a development of a new strategy that will be funded by the provincial government for as long as that program is offered. That is a clear commitment.

Here's a quote from John Rapin, president of the Ontario Medical Association: "I want to applaud the government for making good on its promise to increase funding. Expanding funding for children's immunization programs and public health is long overdue in Ontario and will improve health prevention and promotion initiatives."

CANCER TREATMENT

Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington): My question is to the Minister of Health as well. On Monday of this week, I asked your Premier a question. Clearly, he has been misinformed by staff in the Ministry of Health about the status of your new drug funding program. I want to revisit your answer, not that I'll quote from Hansard, but you'll recall that you indicated an error had been made by Cancer Care Ontario, that had released the drug, and then they were correcting—your word, “correcting”—that error.

Minister, I wish to advise you. I spoke earlier to the oncologist who headed the haematology disease site group that approved Rituximab for the province of Ontario. It received its policy recommendations on September 23 and began usage in the province on January 1. And as you know, I tabled in this House the notice from Cancer Care Ontario saying that the government of Ontario had a hard cap on their new drug funding program and that's why Rituximab for non-Hodgkin's lymphoma was delisted in this province.

Minister, will you correct the record now that I've proved to you that this drug was on the formulary?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): There's no argument about the drug being on the formulary and there's no decision point on the part of the Ministry of Health or certainly the Minister of Health with respect to what drugs Cancer Care Ontario chooses to put on the formulary.

By way of explanation that had been provided to me, I offered to the honourable member what I had been told, which is that the policy approvals necessary to list the drug on their formulary had not been granted, and they made the decision, with no consultation and no communication, which is totally appropriate with my ministry.

Go back and read Hansard very carefully. What you'll find is the essential point and it is this—I repeat it for the honourable member: The government of Ontario will back up Cancer Care Ontario on the decisions that they make and on the implications that has in terms of spending. What I said very clearly to the honourable member is that we make the commitment that the people of Ontario who need cancer drugs will get them, and therefore, as required, we will find the additional resources necessary.

1410

Mr Jackson: Those words are rather hollow for several Ontario families who were told that Rituximab would be available to them in this province, from January 1 to 27, until your government informed Cancer Care Ontario it had a hard cap.

There is a Toronto family I spoke to this morning. At this time last year, this gentleman was almost dead. His oncologist here in this city said that his bone marrow blood tests showed 80% lymph. He had very little time left. They said it was at a critical level and he needed the Rituximab treatments. He went to Indianapolis at US\$26,000 for four treatments. If it was in our province,

it would have been \$12,000 for those four treatments, yet he was denied access to the drug, which is available in this province. Today, his blood is completely clear, because there are no side effects from this drug.

You tell this family and several dozen others that are traveling to the United States now why you've put a hard cap on Cancer Care Ontario's new drug funding program. When will you lift the cap so that these Ontarians do not have to go elsewhere to get this vital treatment?

Hon Mr Smitherman: This is evidence of an honourable member who is not acting in the interests of people who are suffering from cancer in our province, because he continues to propagate the idea that there is a hard cap. If you want to ask me questions, you, sir, have an obligation and a responsibility to listen to the answers and to reflect those answers in what you're communicating to people who are hanging in the balance on these kinds of debates.

I have been very clear and I will repeat one more time: There is no such thing as a hard cap. That is a manufactured phrase that has been manufactured by this member out of a political interest that is not serving the interests of patients in this province.

We print a budgeted number in the Ministry of Health. The member ought to know—I know he does—that in the Ministry of Health in a given year there are many, many programs which are more open-ended, and during the course of a year additional resources are always found to support the expansions which are sometimes unanticipated in those programs. But the key point is this: Those cancer drugs will be paid for.

Mr Jackson: I want to bring to the minister's further attention the damage he's doing to Cancer Care Ontario and to the thousands of cancer patients in this province who on a daily basis are denied drugs that they could get in other provinces and that are freely available to them. Rituximab is available in Prince Edward Island, in BC and Saskatchewan. Alberta actually lifted the discriminatory age cap of 65-plus which we have in this province because they had a rate of 55% fewer deaths from using this drug. It was discriminatory to people who were denied the drug because of their age. They've now put it on their formulary.

On April 1 of this year, Cancer Care Ontario sent a further memo to every single cancer hospital or clinic in this province indicating that the half a million dollars discretionary drug funding money that was available to them for the last five years has now been cancelled because of this government's approach to putting a hard cap on their new drug funding program.

If you are not listening to cancer patients who are having to go to the United States because they have to go into their pockets to find money to pay for this drug, will you not lift the cap?

Hon Mr Smitherman: There is no cap to lift. There is no cap to lift. Cancer Care Ontario makes decisions about drugs that it puts on its formulary based on scientific evidence of efficacy. I don't get involved in those; no one in the government does. Those decisions are not made at cabinet.

The message has been conveyed very directly to Cancer Care Ontario and it has been conveyed very directly numerous times now in this House to the honourable member, who chooses for some political reason not to get it. But here is the fact, and I will repeat it one more time to him: There is no hard cap. We've clearly indicated to Cancer Care Ontario that we will work with them through the course of this year, as required, to enhance the amount of money they need to provide the drugs that their scientific evidence indicates are appropriate for people suffering from cancer in this province. The commitment of the government remains firm on that, and any further attempt by the honourable member really needs, frankly, to be brought into very, very sharp focus, because the intent of the member, it seems, is to destabilize cancer treatment for people in this province. There is no hard cap, and I assure the honourable member that Cancer Care Ontario's resources will—

The Deputy Speaker: New question.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Acting Premier. It's now clear to all Ontarians that a good chunk of the McGuinty health tax is being spent on programs that no one believes are health care services, programs like sewer and water pipe.

The numbers in your budget speak for themselves. You will get an increase in federal funds for health care of \$726 million, and you will take in \$1.635 billion in the McGuinty health tax, which means you'll have an extra \$2.36 billion to spend on health care services. But when you look at the spending on health care services, you're \$200 million short, which is why you start including sewer and water pipe.

Will you admit, despite your Premier's promises on his radio ads, that all the new money isn't going to health care services, and will you withdraw your budget and bring in a new budget which recognizes all the false information that you put forward?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Speaking of false information, who is here spewing it forth, trying to run away from his own party's platform? One time he believes in the determinants of health, and the next, he doesn't. This is a member who represents a riding that has an enormous number of native reserves. You go on to those native reserves and tell them there's no correlation between quality water, drinkable water and health. Is that the point that you're taking? Is that the point that you'd like your deputy leader to advance, after all the work about Walkerton, the lost and forgotten lessons of Walkerton? Evidence there in the front bench of the New Democratic Party.

Our party's commitment is clear. It's an investment in health care. In my ministry alone, \$2.161 billion this year; money from the health premium and money that's provided as a result of work that we've done with the federal government.

Other ministries, aligned across our government in the interest of enhancing the health of Ontarians, also have

money to expend. I don't hear the member talking about the commitment—

Mr Hampton: Your credibility problem grows worse in the out years. I want you to turn to page 12 of your own budget. What it shows on page 12 is that next year, you clearly state, health care spending will increase by only \$600 million over this year, but during that same period you will be taking in \$800 million more through the McGuinty health tax, and the federal government will be increasing health transfers by another \$800 million. So it means that you will have \$1.6 billion more that you say is going to health, but you're only spending \$600 million more on health. Next year you'll have a \$1-billion gap. What are you going to do next year, trot out another \$1 billion of sewer and water pipe and call it health care services?

Hon Mr Smitherman: This member just doesn't get it. He doesn't seem to understand that a government can come together, that it can reject the silo mentality that says the only ministry that influences expenditures on health care is the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. He doesn't seem to—

Interjections.

Hon Mr Smitherman: The others are chiming in. They don't seem to think that expenditures that are made by, as an example, the Minister of Community and Social Services that include significant investments in drug benefits, are health care expenditures by their logic, or that investments in children's mental health by other ministries, other than the one that has "health" in its name, are indeed dedicated to the task of enhancing the overall health of the people of Ontario.

What's new for the honourable member, and that I urge him to get used to, is that this is a government aligned on a narrow range of priorities. Enhancing the quality of health care and enhancing education are tasks that all members and all parts of the government are involved in.

1420

Mr Hampton: I want to read Dalton McGuinty's quote, which is playing on radio ads. It goes like this: "I'm Dalton McGuinty, and I want you to know that every penny of Ontario's new health premium will go to health care." Then we open up the government's budget, and what do we find? Next year the government will take in an extra \$800 million through this regressive tax on middle- and modest-income families. It will get another \$800 million of dedicated health care funding from the federal government. That's \$1.6 billion in total, but its health care investments only go up by \$600 million.

I say to the minister again, what are you going to do next year? Are you going to fill some potholes in the roads and say, "Oh, that's health care spending because the ambulance might go over it"? Are you going to run some ads on television telling people to jog around the racetrack and say that's health care spending? You've got a real credibility problem.

Hon Mr Smitherman: The honourable member continues to run from his platform, which said, "Practical

Solutions for Public Health Care,” where in part he says, “Smog kills thousands, and the NDP plan to shut Ontario’s coal-fired generating stations...” They talk about “protecting the quality of drinking water at source.” The other day in a statement, the honourable member from Sudbury went out of her way to say that housing is an essential component of health care as it relates to people with mental illness in our province.

The point simply is made by the honourable member, which is that health is so pervasive. It is influenced by so many things. It is a government-wide priority. There’s no secret in that. To his challenge at the beginning of his question, I’m pleased to stand in my place and say that the Premier is right: Every cent of the new health premium will be used to enhance the quality of the health of the people of the province of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker: New question.

Mr Hampton: Again to the Acting Premier. I want to read the Premier’s promise again: “I’m Dalton McGuinty, and I want you to know that every penny of Ontario’s new health premium will go to health care.” Then he lists a number of things. He doesn’t list sewer pipe; he doesn’t list water pipe; he doesn’t list television ads saying, “You should start a fitness program.” Those aren’t health care.

That’s why you’re in such trouble, Acting Premier. Once again, you promised one thing, and now it’s clear that the money isn’t all going to go to health care. Some of it’s going to go to other things. You weren’t straightforward. You distorted the facts. Will you admit that to the people of Ontario? Withdraw your budget and bring in a budget which represents what’s really happening.

Hon Mr Smitherman: Man, oh man, you’re working pretty hard to spin away from what used to be an essential principle of your party and your government. Let me read a little bit more from Howard Hampton’s platform, which was drafted almost a year ago: “... finding practical solutions to some of the social causes of bad health—poverty, homelessness, inequality and illiteracy, to name a few—these are the keys to a healthy Ontario.”

That was then, according to Howard Hampton. But now, for purposes of his own political opportunism, he likes to try and characterize an initiative that is designed to give people opportunities to be more active as something that’s fundamentally not in the interest of better health. This is outrageous.

Mr Hampton: I certainly recognize that having safe drinking water is important. I certainly recognize that people being fit is important. I don’t call those “health care services,” and I don’t go out there and try to fool the people of Ontario by pretending that they’re health care services.

I don’t issue a promise saying I’m going to lift \$1.6 billion out of the pockets of modest- and middle-income families and say it’s all going to be spent on health care services, and then spend it on sewer and water pipe. It’s your promise. It’s your distortion of the truth. When are you going to come clean with the people of Ontario?

Hon Mr Smitherman: It’s a little rich to hear the man who authored this statement talk about coming clean to

the people of Ontario: “Public power means the best way to keep people healthy is to have a healthy environment.” The determinants of health messaging—all lost on that government now and the promotion of healthy lifestyles is not about health care, is not about making sure that people have all the information to stay healthy in the first place. This is an attempt on the part of that honourable member and his party to create nothing except a lot of noise.

The fact of the matter is that for years and years, they have been the proponents of the determinants of health argument that says health care is influenced by a variety of things, including the environment we live in, the quality of the air we breathe and the quality of the water we drink. That was then, though, and apparently this is now.

Mr Hampton: I suspect people across Ontario will now be very interested that the Acting Premier of the McGuinty government believes that when you do air quality testing, that’s a health care service and you should pay for it out of the health care tax; that when you put in sewer pipes, that’s a health care service and hard-working families of Ontario should pay for it under this new health care tax.

Minister, admit it, here’s what you did: You decided you were going to raise taxes, you decided you were going to raise them on modest- and middle-income families, and then you thought, “How are we going to make people swallow this? Oh, we’ll call it a health care tax. It doesn’t matter that the money’s going to be spent on sewer and water. It doesn’t matter that in the second year of this health care tax, we’ll spend a billion dollars less on health care services than we take in through the tax. We’ll just fool the people by calling this regressive increase in taxes a health care tax.”

The Deputy Speaker: Question.

Mr Hampton: Admit that, Minister, because it’s obvious to absolutely everybody in Ontario that that’s what the McGuinty government’s doing.

Hon Mr Smitherman: It wasn’t only in his party’s platform—oh, Howard, stop hogging all the questions so Shelley can ask one.

It wasn’t only his presentation in his public power platform that the honourable member is now running from. He went before the Romanow commission. Here’s what he said when he went before the Romanow commission: “Hampton argued that all levels of government must focus on the determinants of health and used the example of diabetes in a northern Ontario community to illustrate the impediments to access to basic health care....” The point of the matter is simple. Use diabetes as an example. How do you have kidney dialysis in Ontario if you do not have access to a clean, safe, stable and secure water source?

The fact of the matter is that they can run and they can make all the noise they want, but at the end of the day, people understand that the implication is clear, and what we learned in Walkerton was that as a province, we have an enhanced obligation to improve water protection.

MINISTER'S COMMENTS

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'll give the Acting Premier a chance to cool off there.

My question today is for the Attorney General. As Ontario's Attorney General, the province's special investigations unit falls under your jurisdiction. It is your responsibility to ensure that the SIU is allowed to conduct investigations without influence from anyone, especially from cabinet ministers.

I established in my question to the Premier yesterday that the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services has tainted the SIU investigation with his recent comments regarding the police shooting of a Scarborough man. Minister Kwinter has also encouraged and biased a potential civil suit by the man's family, because with his comments he clearly implies that the police were wrong to shoot the man, that they should have been equipped with a Taser so they could have used it instead.

Minister Bryant, will you admit right now that Minister Kwinter has tainted the SIU investigation, tainted a potential civil suit and prevented you from effectively doing your job?

1430

Hon Michael Bryant (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): With respect to the SIU investigation, obviously it is under investigation, and I certainly have nothing to say about that.

Minister Kwinter had made references to police operations. That is something Minister Kwinter does, make references to police operations. This government has complete confidence in Minister Kwinter's comments on police operations and otherwise, in every way.

Mr Dunlop: I don't think this government sees how serious this issue really is. It involves someone's death. Yesterday, the Premier brushed me off with short, arrogant answers. He obviously didn't want to comment on the issue at all.

This morning, my staff received a news release from Canada Newswire. In the news release, Minister Kwinter announced the funding already announced by our government—

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): You announced, but you never put the money up.

The Deputy Speaker: Order, the member for Eglinton-Lawrence.

Mr Dunlop: This is a serious issue, in case you don't know.

—on June 14, 2003, for a pilot project to help Toronto Police Services track sex offenders, a program that you and Minister Kwinter had refused to implement until you were embarrassed into doing it a few weeks ago on the anniversary of Holly Jones's death.

Minister, were you involved in the communication strategy to issue the release for the sole purpose of taking attention away from the mess Minister Kwinter has created with his remarks that now jeopardize a special investigations unit investigation?

Hon Mr Bryant: I say to the member, you're asking about two different things. If it's with respect to the announcement made by Minister Kwinter today, then if you have further questions, I suggest you ask him. If you have another supplementary, I will refer the questions.

I just want to make clear that Minister Kwinter did not make a comment on the investigation, and I will not make a comment on the investigation. That is the end of the matter.

HYDRO RATES

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Energy. Minister, yesterday you unveiled a hydroelectricity plan that makes the profit-takers, the fee-takers and the commission-takers of Bay Street very happy. They are literally rubbing their hands with glee. They can't wait to start gouging consumers again. You've taken them back to the good old days of Mike Harris—privatize electricity, but consumers will pay handsomely.

You've already broken your promise to freeze rates until 2006, so you must have some idea of how much hydroelectricity rates will go up after this reintroduction of privatization. How much will they go up? Is it 20%, 30%, 40%? What are you telling the people of Ontario?

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I can say with confidence to the people of Ontario that hydro rates will go up a lot less than the 40% they went up under his government.

Mr Hampton: Minister, that's the same answer Jim Wilson used to give before the prices shot through the roof. But I'll tell you, the people of Ontario deserve an answer.

For example, we know from the Electricity Conservation and Supply Task Force that to generate electricity from natural gas would cost 7.5-cents a kilowatt hour. That's a lot more than 4.7 cents. Your officials have these numbers. Will you share them with the people of Ontario, or are you afraid to tell the people of Ontario how much hydro privatization under the Liberals is going to drive up their hydro bill?

Hon Mr Duncan: The numbers are readily available from the IMO, and they vary from day to day. I take it from his question that the member would prefer to use coal, which is cheaper than natural gas.

Hon James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism and Recreation): He wants coal. He's in favour of coal.

Hon Mr Duncan: I suppose he wants coal.

The member opposite does not understand the hydro file. His policy's logic was flawed. The history he's recounted of hydro in this province was flawed. His ideas have been tried and didn't work. Ultimately, the people of this province rejected his ideas with respect to hydro.

What we can say is, if this government fails to do what we've set out to do in this legislation, then prices will go up. We're confident that the best way to provide reliable and stable electricity prices in this province can be found in the path that we've set forward, a path that undoes the

mess that the NDP left this province in when it cancelled all conservation programs and the mess it left when the NDP government raised electricity prices by 40% in less than three years.

MUNICIPALITIES

Mr Jim Brownell (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): My question is to the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal. In my riding of Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh, many of the smaller and rural communities and municipal councils are struggling to fund imperative infrastructure projects such as water treatment plants and road repair.

With the announcement of the 2004 Ontario budget, our government dedicated gas tax monies to Ontario cities for upgrading and maintenance of public transit systems. This dedication equals two cents of the existing gas tax, or approximately \$312 million when fully implemented. However, in Ontario there are countless communities and municipalities that do not have public transit systems.

Minister, the gas tax funds are a welcome and much-needed announcement to larger municipalities. However, since smaller municipalities will not be able to access these funds, what has been allocated in the budget to offset this perceived inequity, and what is our government doing to aid rural Ontarians in advancing their infrastructure needs?

Hon David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): I thank the member for the question. I want to commend to you the words of AMO president Ann Mulvale, who said, "This budget turns a page in Ontario's recent history by working with municipalities, showing greater respect to property taxpayers, and making essential municipal services and infrastructure a priority." And she wasn't simply referring to our gas tax commitment. She was also referring to the Canada-Ontario municipal rural infrastructure fund, about which we signed a letter of intent with our federal and municipal partners at the OSUM conference in Owen Sound on May 6. COMRIF, as it's called, is a \$900-million fund dedicated to communities of 250,000 and less. It will help our rural and northern municipalities invest in capital projects that will help with prosperity, projects such as roads and bridges, water and sewer. This government is committed to safe, clean, liveable communities right across this province.

Mr Brownell: Thank you for clarifying how our government is going to aid rural Ontario to reach its infrastructure goals. As a government, we have high standards for municipalities and the services they offer to their residents. As a former municipal politician, I understand these constraints, which, under the past Tory regime, were downloaded upon municipalities without a whole lot of foresight and long-term planning.

To hear that our government has finally committed to helping rural Ontario provide safe water and waste water systems, safe roads and bridges and generally greatly

needed infrastructure improvements gives me much pleasure. I look forward to helping the communities of Stormont, Dundas, and Charlottenburgh apply and receive funding under the COMRIF program.

However, Minister, can you inform this House about other ways we are aiding to relieve the financial pressures on municipalities initiated by the past Tory government?

Hon Mr Caplan: One of the reasons why municipal leaders are so supportive of the budget that my colleague the finance minister introduced in this House on May 18 is because there are other methods. We are setting up the Ontario Strategic Infrastructure Financing Authority, or OSIFA, which will be a pooled finance vehicle for municipalities, a subsidized loan pool. OSIFA is simply another way in which we are going to be helping our rural and smaller communities in Ontario to invest in critical infrastructure. It is especially important in light of the fact that both previous governments did not make these much-needed investments, and our province is literally crumbling around us. Municipal leaders know the kind of support that Dalton McGuinty and Finance Minister Sorbara and this entire government are providing to them.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): My question is to the Minister of Health. You might know that the most efficient program for eye cataract surgery is in my riding of Durham at Lakeridge Health Bowmanville. It's my understanding that they perform 29 extractions or replacements on a daily basis.

However, in the past few weeks a number of my constituents who have had the pre-op assessments etc have been called and told that their surgery has been cancelled. Lakeridge Health tells me they are working with your ministry people and appealing for increased funding.

Minister, would you kindly advise what action is being taken to respond to Lakeridge's request for increased funding for their eye cataract centre in Bowmanville?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I would express more generally—this can't speak specifically to the Lakeridge piece of it, except to acknowledge that they're one of a variety of important providers of that service in Ontario.

We have additional resources as a government to deploy for cataract surgeries, recognizing it is one of those areas in our health care system where people are waiting longer than we think is appropriate, particularly given the capacity to enhance their quality of life. What I can assure the member of is that we're working in the acute care branch to establish budgets with hospitals for this year. Involved in that is the decision around where these procedures will be provided. All I can say to the honourable member is that we're working away diligently on that, and when I have something to announce, he'll be among the first to know.

1440

Mr O'Toole: That's reassuring for the patients who are on the waiting list, but I read and watched your budget with some interest. You have allocated funding for 9,000 additional procedures in cataract, and your attempt to shorten waiting times—I completely encourage that because the truth is that it really is a quality-of-life issue. In fact, I have a specific constituent who's waiting for the surgery very patiently, and to return to work to support her family. Minister, I wonder if you could tell not just me in the House today when you're prepared to make those commitments so people can get on with the quality of life you've made reference to in the province of Ontario.

Hon Mr Smitherman: I would very much like to thank the honourable member for his endorsement of our government's strategy, as contained in the budget, which includes very specific initiatives to address wait times around cataracts, hips and knees, cardiac, cancer and access to MRI and CT scans in the province. I would just say to the honourable member that it will be a little bit of time yet before the absolute allocations are provided, but we are looking forward to getting on quickly with the challenge of shortening the list, the wait times for people waiting for cataract surgery in the province. Lakeridge continues to be one of those partners we look forward to working with.

DOCTORS' SERVICES

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): My question is to the Deputy Premier. My question has to do with the whole issue of the underserved situation we find in northern Ontario when it comes to physicians. Minister, you'll know that in towns like Kapuskasing, Geraldton, Timmins, and the list goes on, we have a shortage of family doctors. There are not enough doctors to serve the needs of the community. In fact, 1,700 patients are without a doctor in the city of Sudbury, and in the city of Timmins it's somewhere around 10,000.

You are now going to delist chiropractic services. You are now going to delist eye exams out of the OHIP formulary. You tell me how that's going to assist the underserved problem when people start piling into the doctors' offices because they can no longer afford to go to a chiropractor or an eye doctor.

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): When you ask your supplementary, I say to the honourable member, why don't you stand up and tell me why you cut the production line of doctors in this province? It's the biggest single contributor to the problem that is being experienced right now. The fact of the matter is that at least this party, while in government, enhanced our production capacities, but everybody will know the production of a doctor doesn't happen overnight.

It's important to note that just this very morning, the Ontario Medical Association spoke to the committee reviewing the budget and was complimentary in a variety

of areas about the initiatives we're undertaking as a government. Specific to the issue of doctors is the Northern Ontario Medical School, which I know the member supports, and we have already begun to see net increases in the flow of doctors to northern Ontario in anticipation of the role to be more involved in helping to do the clinical training for new generations of doctors.

Secondly, with respect to—oh, sorry, you want me to—

Mr Bisson: Yes, sit down, George, because quite frankly you're missing the point. The serious issue is that there is a shortage of doctors in northern Ontario. You can try to blame it on the Conservatives, you can try to blame it on the NDP, but the fact is you're the government, you're the minister in the chair and you're the one now responsible. Now your government decides you're going to exacerbate the problem of underserved areas in northern Ontario by forcing patients out of chiropractors' offices, out of the eye doctors' offices, and into either emergency wards that are filled to capacity, as you well know, or into the doctor's offices.

Minister, will you do the right thing and relist those services that you're about to delist in Ontario, and not make a bad situation in northern Ontario even worse?

Hon Mr Smitherman: I'd like to remind the honourable member that his party cut medical school spaces in this province. That's where doctors get produced, after all. So it's not about blame. Maybe it's a little bit more about standing up and taking some responsibility for the short-sighted efforts that you were involved in as a member of a government not long enough forgotten in this province.

I heard the physiotherapists were before the committee this morning, and here's what they had to say, in part: "In 1993, the Ontario Physiotherapy Association negotiated an historic fee increase with the OHIP schedule 5 with the Rae government that would have revitalized community-based physiotherapy." Regrettably, that fee increase was rolled back in the social contract.

Here's my point, after all: We're working very hard as a government to make up for a variety of decisions made by those two parties while in government. I believe that our family health team proposal to bring a multi-disciplinary approach to the provision of primary care services will be an extraordinary advantage to the people of northern Ontario.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Mr John Milloy (Kitchener Centre): In establishing the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, our government delivered on an important election promise. Our goal in establishing such a ministry was to eliminate many of the silos that exist within our government, demonstrate the importance we place in our children and youth in this province and pay particular attention to their programs and services. Children's agencies in my area, particularly family and children's services, and our local children's treatment centre, KidsAbility, supported the

creation of the new ministry but withheld judgment until they saw real results being delivered. Can the minister tell us of the progress she has made in keeping our commitment to better serve the needs of the children of Ontario, particularly in Waterloo region?

Hon Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): Since becoming a minister in this area—having the great honour of being minister in this area—one of my challenges is to better integrate the services across the province, and that means working very closely with other levels of government and with agencies like KidsAbility. Some of the things we've done are: We announced capital funding for non-profit child care centres, and just the other day we announced a 3% operating increase in children's treatment centres, including KidsAbility in your area. The centre will receive over \$130,000. As well, we've relieved the fiscal pressures of historical deficits of our children's aid societies and we'll very soon be announcing \$25 million of new money for children's mental health and \$58 million of new money for child care in this province.

Mr Milloy: Children's organizations like KidsAbility have told me they want to forge a new relationship with the government and work together to ensure that the needs of our children are being properly addressed. They want to be full partners rather than supplicants, going cap in hand to the government every year, often to be turned away. Will the minister commit to reviewing our government's programs and services for children and establish a new working relationship with organizations like KidsAbility?

Hon Mrs Bountrogianni: What I've heard across the province over the last few months of consultations is that often programs don't meet the needs of children; basically children are trying to meet the needs of programs. We have to turn that around and break the silos that we heard earlier in this question period. In order for this to happen, we do have to work very closely with our transfer partners, with agencies like KidsAbility. I understand the good relationship that you have with the KidsAbility in your city. I also want to reassure you that this 3% is not one-time funding but annualized funding that makes KidsAbility and other treatment centres better able to plan for the future.

NORTHERN ONTARIO

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. On June 9, while introducing an amendment to the Ontario Municipal Act, 2001, you stated, "Far too often in years past, municipalities have been caught off guard and taken by surprise by the provincial government of the day." Did you consult with the six municipalities in the district of Muskoka before taking them out of the north in the budget of May 18?

Hon John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors): I'd like to refer that to the Minister of Finance.

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): I'm happy to answer the question. I know the member has argued very eloquently the case for his constituency and the municipalities in the district of Muskoka. The fact is that we have an obligation to bring some reality back to the way we allocate very scarce taxpayer resources. The area we returned to the boundaries of southern Ontario had historically been part of southern Ontario, really, since the early days of Confederation. The land mass didn't move.

Back in the year 2000, the then Conservative government, for reasons that I don't understand, changed the boundaries to include Muskoka, including Gravenhurst and all that wonderful cottage country, in the boundaries of northern Ontario. Frankly, we thought that was an incorrect decision and we corrected it in our budget.

1450

Mr Miller: I would like to remind you that the federal government of Canada recognizes the entire riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka as part of the north.

I would like to go back to the minister's comments last week and remind you that there was in fact no consultation—I repeat, no consultation—with the six municipalities in the district of Muskoka. They were caught off guard and surprised by your government's actions. In the same statement, the minister went on to say that after municipalities have "worked hard to draft their annual budgets, the province has often come along and imposed new standards, programs and other municipal requirements." That is exactly what your government did.

These municipalities made up their budgets expecting to be part of the north, expecting funding from the northern Ontario heritage fund. Then on May 18, you came along, without consultation, without warning, and removed them from the north. At this point, seeing as you didn't consult with the municipalities in Muskoka before the May 18 budget, will you at least commit to consulting with them now?

Hon Mr Sorbara: There's absolutely no doubt. I'd be delighted to meet with all of those municipalities and have further discussions to respond to their needs. But let's be fair. I invite my friend to be fair about where the real needs are in the province. I invite him to visit northern communities where the issue is depopulation, where young people are leaving the communities and heading south, where the values of property are decreasing because the amount of business activity is not there.

I tell my friend that we have very scarce resources in this province. If we are going to give special treatment to the people of northern Ontario, that should go to the people of northern Ontario. Regrettably, we cannot share those resources with the people of Gravenhurst and the other municipalities in Muskoka, which really form part of a pretty vibrant southern Ontario economy. It was the

right decision. I'd be delighted to meet and discuss with those municipalities the rationale behind our decision.

IMMIGRANTS' SKILLS

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): My question is to the Acting Premier. In 2000, four Albanian-born women in this province applied for Ontario College of Teachers certification. These four women were determined by the college to meet the qualifications. They passed all the tests in English. They concurrently, at the same time, went to York University and passed all of those tests. They were certified for two years, but the rules changed and these women, who did all of this work trying to get into a profession which they had previously done in Albania, are left high and dry. They have been teaching in private schools. They have been told that they're doing an excellent job.

In your election platform, you said you were going to help new immigrants get certified. Yet your ministers, the Minister of Education and David Caplan, have refused to meet with them. They have refused to help them. They have refused to do anything to help these women do what is necessary to get teaching accreditation in this province. I want a commitment from you today that you will meet with them and you will help them get the jobs that they deserve, and for which they are now qualified.

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): The Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Hon Mary Anne V. Chambers (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): I want to thank the member from Beaches-East York for bringing that to our attention. We are very eager to make sure that internationally trained individuals can practise in their chosen career here. As far as teachers are concerned, in January, one of our announcements was \$1 million, working in partnership with the college of teachers, which will serve 2,000 internationally trained teachers, enabling them to become accredited to work here. If I could just continue, or if you want a supplementary, I'd like to give you a little bit more.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): Some of these women are constituents of mine and they came to see me back in February. I've been dealing with the college of teachers on behalf of these women, asking them to please grandparent them because they completed all of the requirements under the rules at that time. They're now devastated to be told that they can't go out and work in their chosen profession. We are asking you very specific—

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): Totally unacceptable.

Ms Churley: It is totally unacceptable. We are asking you very specifically today, will you step in and fix this problem for these women? I want to tell you that if you don't do that, you will not be keeping your commitment to immigrants to support their efforts for Canadian

certification in their professions. Will you please look into this case and fix it?

Hon Mrs Chambers: I will be very pleased to look into these cases. I would encourage the member from Toronto-Danforth or the member from Beaches-East York to provide me with files on those individuals. I will be very pleased to look into that.

SARS

Mrs Liz Sandals (Guelph-Wellington): My question is for the Minister of Health. A few months ago, the final report of the Ontario expert panel on SARS and infectious disease control and the interim report of Commissioner Archie Campbell on the investigation into the outbreak of severe acute respiratory syndrome were made public. As I recall, you said you would get back to the public within two months. Minister, that was almost two months ago and I'm wondering if you would have an update for us.

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Indeed, I do. First, I want to report to the House one very significant piece of progress. The Premier has given me some additional resources to help on the challenge of public health renewal, and that's by our colleague the member for Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh.

We are very involved at the ministry in developing our comprehensive response to the reports of Naylor, Walker and Campbell, and I'm pleased to tell the House that that response will be forthcoming next week.

Mrs Sandals: We've been talking about the budget and the fact that there is \$190 million in new investments in public health, and we all know that the failure of the public health system contributed to the SARS situation. Do you have any examples of how that money will be used?

Hon Mr Smitherman: More information on all these points will be forthcoming.

I would want to cover some areas that are going to be the beneficiaries of additional spending with respect to public health: first is the responsibility that the province is going to take back from our municipal partners, which I think has been enormously well received among municipalities; our immunization program, which we've spoken about; enhanced infection control; a very significant return to a tobacco strategy, long missing in this province; campaigns designed to enhance physical activity and address obesity and the challenges associated with it; new investments in public health information technology, which has been lagging far behind; enhancements to the amount that we spend at the Canadian blood service; and I think perhaps quite notably, our fulfillment of our party's commitment to help to develop a new public health agency for the province of Ontario. These eight distinct areas will be the beneficiaries of additional resources, all of which are going to contribute very significantly to the renewal of public health in Ontario.

AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): My question is to the Minister of Agriculture and Food. Yesterday you suggested that I review the estimates tabled for your ministry. When I received a copy of the estimates, I did just that. I would suggest that you not tell everyone to do that, because they will be surprised by the numbers. I saw \$65 million of your budget cuts coming directly from the farm safety nets. I saw that money to cover farmers' needs through the agricultural policy framework has dropped dramatically.

How can you face the farmers of this province and tell them you are fighting on their behalf when you let your budget be cut by \$128 million, half of which comes directly from the financial support of the farmers?

Hon Steve Peters (Minister of Agriculture and Food): Obviously the honourable member doesn't know how to read the estimates, because there is not a \$128-million cut to the budget. There is a change, a grand total change in the budget of \$66.9 million.

What we're trying to do as a government is something that you didn't do, and I can't believe you have the nerve to stand up, as a member who campaigned in 1995, who stood there in front of the people and said—and Mike Harris said—"No cuts to agriculture." What did you do within your first six months in office? You closed down the vast majority of the agricultural extension offices in this province.

How you can stand up and be so high and mighty—we've had to do things differently, but we are committed to supporting the agricultural industry.

1500

Mr Hardeman: I suggest that the minister do a little reading of his own and find out that the Mike Harris government was elected in 1995, and the changes in the delivery of agriculture services were in 1999, in a different mandate of government totally. I suggest he read the document.

Minister, today we heard that you would finally flow money to the beef industry that you promised last February. Let's be clear: This is not new money. You have already made that announcement. But what about the front-line producers? They need compensation. Minister, you knew this when you were agriculture critic, and that, I believe, was in 1999. You told the then minister, Helen Johns, to do what it takes to save the entire industry. You said that provincial contributions of 40% were a minimum and called on the minister to enhance and expand the program.

Minister, are you willing to go to your Premier and cabinet and ask for some of your safety money back so you can do what you know is needed, which is to compensate farmers reeling from the closed American border?

Hon Mr Peters: First, I want to thank the members of the Ontario Cattlemen's Association, the Dairy Farmers of Ontario and the Ontario Sheep Marketing Agency who are here today. I want to thank them for hosting this ap-

preciation day today, but I think, more importantly, for demonstrating to everyone in this House and the staff in this building and the citizens of Ontario that we do need to stand behind and support our agricultural industry.

That's why this government moved forward with the agricultural policy framework. You were not able to achieve a deal with the federal government. We worked with the Ontario Agricultural Commodity Council and the Ontario Cattlemen's Association to get a better deal for the citizens of Ontario and ultimately a better deal for all Canadian farmers. We were able to get that agreement in place with the negative margins. We have a commitment from this government of \$120 million a year in support of agricultural programs. If you talk to those farmers about the CAIS program, you'll find out that that's a program that's going to work and help the farmers.

PETITIONS

MOTORCYCLE INSURANCE

Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington): This petition is signed by several hundred of my constituents.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas tens of thousands of responsible motorcyclists are being hit with huge increases in insurance or are being denied coverage because of the type of vehicle they ride;

"Whereas the premiums for the mandatory insurance coverage for motorcyclists have increased on average over 40% in the past two years;

"Whereas many responsible riders can no longer afford to insure their motorcycles due to high insurance costs;

"Whereas sales of motorcycles in Ontario have dropped over 7% year-to-date, a figure attributed directly to the increase in insurance rates; and

"Whereas many businesses and individuals in the motorcycle industry are suffering due to the loss of sales and decreased employment high insurance rates are causing;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Please amend the insurance regulations to make motorcycle insurance more affordable and to ensure motorcyclists are treated fairly and equitably by insurance companies, brokers and agents."

This petition has my signature of support.

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I've got a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that I received from the office of Dr Gary Bovine, chiropractor.

"Re support for chiropractic services in Ontario health insurance plan:

"Whereas,

"Elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need;

"Those with reduced ability to pay—including seniors, low-income families and the working poor—will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments;

"Elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

"There was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province."

I have signed this petition as well.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr Kim Craiton (Niagara Falls): I am pleased to present to the House a petition from the residents, family members and supporters of Bella Senior Care Residence in the city of Niagara Falls. In the petition they're indicating that "long-term care is underfunded and is one of the lowest-funded long-term-care sectors in North America.

"Long-term care needs nurses and proper funding to ensure such areas as dietary, housekeeping and maintenance and all other expenses needed for a quality of existence that the seniors so rightfully have earned. Bella Senior Care Residence needs the government's support for seniors in long-term care in Ontario."

I'm pleased that our budget is doing that and I'm pleased to affix my signature to these 400 petitions.

HEALTH CARE

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leeds-Grenville): I have several hundred names from my riding, Leeds-Grenville, attached to petitions that read:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Liberal government has announced in their budget that they are delisting key health services such as routine eye exams, chiropractic and physiotherapy services,

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To reverse the delisting of eye exams, chiropractic and physiotherapy services and restore funding for these important and necessary services."

TAXATION

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leeds-Grenville): I also have a petition dealing with the government's breaking of the taxpayer protection act and their failure to comply with the requirement for a referendum. I'm affixing my signature to both these petitions. Thank you.

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I have another petition to save chiropractic services in Ontario that reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas,

"Elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need;

"Those with reduced ability to pay—including seniors, low-income families and the working poor—will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments;

"Elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs;

"There was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province."

I agree with this petition.

UN ONTARIO SANS FUMÉE

M. Phil McNeely (Ottawa-Orléans): « Attendu que le gouvernement ontarien devance son projet de loi pour rendre l'Ontario une province sans fumée;

« Nous, soussignés, adressons à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario la pétition suivante :

« Nous, membres de la communauté de l'École secondaire catholique Garneau à Orléans (Ontario), demandons au gouvernement ontarien de devancer son projet de loi pour rendre notre province sans fumée. »

Merci.

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario,

"Re support for chiropractic services in Ontario health insurance plan:

"Whereas,

"Elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need; and

"Those with reduced ability to pay—including seniors, low-income families and the working poor—will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments;

"Elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

"There was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province."

I'm pleased to sign my name to that.

AJAX-PICKERING HOSPITAL

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads as follows:

"Whereas at the time the Centenary Health Centre and Ajax-Pickering hospitals amalgamated under the umbrella of the Rouge Valley Health System, a commitment was made by the Health Services Restructuring Commission that the communities of Whitby/Pickering/Ajax, according to the amalgamation agreement, would not lose a full-service hospital and would maintain all existing services; and

"Whereas municipal governments in the region of Durham have provided financial support to the Rouge Valley Health System on the understanding that Ajax-Pickering hospital would continue as a full-service hospital; and

"Whereas numerous service clubs and other organizations have also raised money in support of the expansion of the Ajax-Pickering hospital and services provided therein such as the maternity unit on the understanding that the Ajax-Pickering hospital would continue as a full-service facility; and

"Whereas the Rouge Valley Health System has changed its strategic plan without consulting its key stakeholders, such as the residents who use the hospital, the doctors, nurses and other professional staff that work within the system and the local governments and organizations that fund the hospital; and

"Whereas this has led to a decrease in the level of service provided by the maternity unit and the number of acute care beds;

"We, the undersigned concerned citizens of west Durham, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That a full-service hospital with all the existing services at the time of amalgamation be maintained at the Ajax-Pickering site and new services added as the population continues to grow and age, as agreed to by the Ajax-Pickering General Hospital and Centenary Health

Centre in the amalgamation agreement signed May 31, 1998."

Mr Speaker, I'm sorry, it's a long petition, but I certainly agree with it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Of course, that was the member from Davenport.

1510

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberal government is cutting provincial funding for essential health care services like optometry, physiotherapy and chiropractic care;

"Whereas this privatization of health care services will force Ontarians to pay out-of-pocket for essential health care;

"Whereas Ontarians already pay for health care through their taxes and will be forced to pay even more through the government's new regressive health tax;

"Whereas the Liberals promised during the election that they would not cut or privatize health care services in Ontario;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We demand the McGuinty Liberal government keep its promises and guarantee adequate provincial funding for critical health services like eye, physiotherapy and chiropractic care."

I agree and have signed this petition.

DISTRICT OF MUSKOKA

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I have thousands more petitions to keep Muskoka part of the north, now bringing the total to 6,000, and I shall read it.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the district of Muskoka is currently designated as part of northern Ontario; and

"Whereas the geography and socio-economic conditions of Muskoka are very similar to the rest of northern Ontario; and

"Whereas the median family income in the district of Muskoka is \$10,000 below the provincial average and \$6,000 below the median family income for Greater Sudbury; and

"Whereas removing the district of Muskoka from northern Ontario will adversely affect the hard-working people of Muskoka by restricting access to programs and incentives enjoyed by residents of other northern communities; and

"Whereas the residents of Muskoka should not be confused with those who cottage or vacation in the district; and

"Whereas the federal government of Canada recognizes the district of Muskoka as part of the north; and

"Whereas this is a mean-spirited and politically motivated decision on the part of the McGuinty government;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government maintain the current definition of northern Ontario for the purposes of government policy and program delivery."

I support this petition and affix my signature to it.

TAXATION

Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): A petition to force Premier McGuinty to obey the taxpayer protection law:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the McGuinty government's 2004 budget will break the taxpayer protection law by not conducting a referendum on tax increases; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty signed an election pledge on September 11, 2003, not to raise taxes without the explicit consent of voters through a referendum; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty promised in TV ads not to raise taxes by one penny on working families; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty pledged in writing to obey the taxpayer protection law, which requires a referendum before increasing taxes;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To ensure that all of the McGuinty government's tax increases are put before the people of Ontario in a referendum."

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I have another petition and it is addressed to the Premier of Ontario and the Minister of Finance. It reads as follows:

"We, the undersigned property owners and tenants, strongly recommend changes to the current value assessment system.

"We believe the municipal tax system should reflect the following principles: (1) Ability to pay should be a consideration; (2) property taxes should be related to services 100%; (3) homeowners should not be penalized for improving their properties; (4) dependence on the residential property tax to raise provincial and municipal revenues should be reduced; (5) the assessment system should be stable over a long period of time—10 years; (6) assessments should be objective, accurate, consistent, correct, equitable and easily understood—house sf class price; lot sf class price, garage sf class price; and (7) the owner should be authorized to approve the assessment."

Most of our funding has come from the ratepayers groups and citizens from across the city. I will just sign my name to this petition.

HEALTH CARE

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I have a petition from my constituents in Parry Sound-Muskoka. It says:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Liberal government has announced in their budget that they are delisting key health services such as routine eye exams, chiropractic and physiotherapy services,

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To reverse the delisting of chiropractic, physiotherapy and optometrist services and restore funding for these important and necessary services."

I support this petition and affix my signature to it.

LCBO OUTLET

Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): A petition for an LCBO agency store in Baxter:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the LCBO agency store program is intended to revitalize our small towns and villages and to provide rural consumers with responsible and convenient access to LCBO services;

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make available to the village of Baxter an LCBO agency store."

I've signed and agree with this petition.

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): This is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Re support for chiropractic services in Ontario health insurance plan;

"Whereas elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need; and

"Whereas those with reduced ability to pay—including seniors, low-income families and the working poor—will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments; and

"Whereas elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to the government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

"Whereas there was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province."

I'm pleased to sign that.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ADAMS MINE LAKE ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004

SUR LE LAC DE LA MINE ADAMS

Resuming the debate adjourned on June 15, 2004, on the motion for third reading of Bill 49, An Act to prevent the disposal of waste at the Adams Mine site and to amend the Environmental Protection Act in respect of the disposal of waste in lakes / *Projet de loi 49, Loi visant à empêcher l'élimination de déchets à la mine Adams et à modifier la Loi sur la protection de l'environnement en ce qui concerne l'élimination de déchets dans des lacs.*

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I listened with interest to the debate yesterday. I'll have an opportunity in a few minutes to put some of my thoughts on the record. Right now, I want to respond to the comments made by several of the official opposition members yesterday. I forget some of the things that were said. I don't agree with many of things that were said. Some of the Conservative members are outraged that the Liberal government is stopping the Adams mine. I certainly don't agree with them on that.

It was our party, me working with Jack Layton, David Miller, Michael Prue—who was at city council then—who fought very hard from our end here in the city of Toronto, along with Gilles Bisson, Howard Hampton, Shelley Martel and others from the north, fighting it from that end. So we think this is the right way to go. We hope this time it really is “D-E-D,” as Mel Lastman said at the time; dead.

I do want to say that there was something that I agreed very vehemently with: some statements made by the member for Simcoe North. Those were around how the government is determining, cherry-picking, what they're going to stop and what they're going to allow to happen in other jurisdictions in terms of landfills. What I would say about that is that there isn't going to be an opportunity any more for any government of any stripe to be able to site landfills, to expand landfills, to build incinerators, to even build the new modern type of incinerator—the so-called gasification process I'll talk about later—because people just won't allow it.

So I would say in response that we all agree that, whether philosophically we're there or not, we have to move on by dealing with our waste in different ways.

1520

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): I'm pleased to comment on the comments made previously. I understand the member from Toronto-Danforth has suggested that it's not so much the bill, but she's also questioning the motive with which this bill is being brought forward.

I have to say that it certainly is about the notion that government has a role to play in protecting the public

interest when it comes to the environment. This is an example where government has acted. Very shortly, we will also see that hazardous waste landfilling will also have higher standards in this province. As you may know, in the last four years in opposition, I brought to the attention of the government of the day the need to have more stringent standards for the disposal of hazardous waste in this province. Nothing was done. As a matter of fact, the notion that this was possible was scoffed at.

Well, we're also doing that. So there's a comprehensive, long-term plan to deal not just with the nature of the Adams mine and landfilling at this site, but also with how we dispose of hazardous material in this province so that we don't have the lowest regulations in North America and that our standards are strict and therefore we are protecting the public long-term. It is about that long-term vision that we bring in this type of legislation, so that we don't leave legacies to our children and our grandchildren that will—but something we would be proud of long-term when we say, “You know what? We have been able to protect the environment, and the government has done the right thing in these matters.”

It's silly of the third party to question motive, even though the bill is a good one.

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I'm pleased to add comments on the speech by the member from Simcoe North on the Adams mine lake bill. I think that if the government wants to achieve the 60% diversion target it has set for itself, it should be seriously looking at a deposit-return system, which is why a month or so ago, I introduced an LCBO deposit-return private member's bill in this place. It's been shown in other jurisdictions that a deposit-return system is much more effective in terms of keeping waste out of our landfill sites, in terms of keeping litter off our streets and roadways, and there are many other benefits from a deposit-return system.

I would like to comment not only on the member from Simcoe North, but also on the member from Lanark-Carleton, who was speaking on this bill yesterday as well. I'd like to point out that I don't like landfill sites, personally. However, in the case of this Adams mine lake landfill, the proponent had gone through a lengthy, expensive process, following the rules that were set for the proponent, and then the government just pulled the rug out from underneath this proponent.

I question the way in which they have done this bill, the way they have arbitrarily changed the rules at the last moment. I think there are some serious property rights being undermined by the way in which this bill has been introduced. That is something I have real concerns about with this bill. I hope it's not the way this government is going to proceed with property rights in the future.

Mr Wayne Arthurs (Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge): I have enjoyed the debate, particularly yesterday. The member from Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant spoke for some time on the matter. During that time, he was referencing a motion that, I guess, today is before the Michigan House of Representatives, regarding landfill matters. He

made particular reference to Daniel Acciavatti and some concerns he seemed to have had.

Let me assure this House that our Minister of the Environment has met with Member Acciavatti on two occasions so far. When he was here at the hearings on this bill, he made reference to the fact that the waste stream that's coming from the Toronto area is, in waste terms, clean waste. It was his view that, working together with the province of Ontario, there would be common accord and opportunities to continue doing what we're doing as we seek the long-term solutions necessary for our waste.

I must say that, having heard the members opposite talk about landfill, how the proponents have all this investment and that, somehow, by not allowing this to go forward, we are putting them at some disadvantage, that we're taking away their rights, I recall the NDP government, with the IWA process, spent an awful lot of taxpayers' dollars trying to site landfill sites in the greater Toronto area.

One of those was in the municipality that I represent. I have to tell you that my constituents didn't feel that, because the government of the day had spent tens of millions of dollars trying to site landfills, they should let one go forward in the municipality in which I live and which I represent. What it did do was drive home the need to deal with waste.

As a matter of fact, I put the waste out just yesterday, for the first time, as an expansion within our community: the wet waste program. It's now expanding throughout the municipality.

I know the time is short in the couple of minutes I have right now, but I'd love to be able to tell the House more about that initiative during the course of debate.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Simcoe North has two minutes to reply.

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'd like to join with my colleagues from Lanark-Carleton and Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant to thank the folks from Toronto-Danforth, Sarnia-Lambton, Parry Sound-Muskoka and Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge for their comments on our leadoff yesterday.

In summary, we won't be supporting this piece of legislation. It's as clear as that. We believe there are a lot of faults that were outlined by all three of our speakers yesterday.

I think what's really important is that we have to look at what happened as a result of the Walkerton inquiry. Justice Dennis O'Connor made some very, very specific recommendations. One of those recommendations, of course, was to provide water source protection legislation. In effect, this bill jumps ahead of all the other pieces of legislation or other landfill approval sites in the province of Ontario. We haven't seen any background material that would suggest any technical reasons why the Adams mine should be turned down, and yet we have all kinds of other landfill sites across the province. I know you know I've mentioned many times about site 41 in my riding.

The bottom line is that they have jumped the gun on this bill for political purposes. They're passing it. I understand that a lot of people don't like the idea of waste going into an old mine shaft, but the bottom line is that they have not looked at other landfills across the province. If you treated everybody fairly, I could understand why this bill would be passed, but this bill does not treat the other municipalities fairly. I made that very clear in my comments yesterday.

In summary, I'll say again that site 41 in my riding is a mistake. The recommendations of the Walkerton inquiry clearly point that out. I'd like to see a moratorium put on that site until we actually see legislation on water source protection implemented in Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Ms Churley: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I seek unanimous consent for the member for Timmins-James Bay to use any remaining time in our lead a little later in the rotation. He can't be here right now. Is there unanimous consent for that?

The Deputy Speaker: Consent has been requested. Is it the pleasure of the House?

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Just repeat it, please.

Ms Churley: Mr Bisson, the member for Timmins-James Bay, would like to share the lead with me, but I would like it to be later in the rotation. Is there consent for that?

The Deputy Speaker: I think we have consent. Agreed.

1530

Ms Churley: Thank you, Mr Speaker. And I understand the House leader needs to know before saying yes to any unanimous consent request from any other party. We listen very carefully over here when the House leader from the government side stands up to make any motions.

Here we are, talking about Adams mine again. I simply want to say that I support the legislation to hopefully kill Adams mine once and for all. There are a lot of people, of course—and I said this when the bill was first introduced—taking credit, as politicians and parties tend to do. They don't often take responsibility for things that go wrong and the actions that cause problems, but politicians are well-known for taking credit for things that they played a tiny part in. That's OK, but I also think it's important to point out who really did the hard, slogging work, and to thank them, because I don't believe we'd be here today, years after this was first proposed. When the NDP was in government, we said no to Adams mine. We got a lot of flak for it. You weren't here then—a lot of new members since then.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes.

Ms Churley: Were you? Sorry, Speaker.

You will recall that we said two things: We were not going to allow incineration and Adams mine to be options for garbage. It was, I admit, a rather disastrous process we went through in trying to find new land sites. We were hoping that banning these other two things,

along with some of the other plans we had for diversion of garbage, would lead us more quickly to a full environmental assessment; once, and if, sites had been found under the old environmental assessment, before it was scoped by the previous government, we'd be looking at, through that process under the Environmental Assessment Act, alternatives to the undertaking and alternatives to the site.

Intervener funding used to exist then, but the previous government cancelled that as well, and we're hoping the Liberals will bring that back. By the way, that doesn't cost the taxpayer a penny. It came under the Attorney General's office, and it was paid for by the proponents of the large undertaking.

Under that scenario, we were hoping that would happen, and that it would drive the process of moving us forward more quickly in recycling, composting, all of the other diversion tactics that we know about and we're still so far behind on. What happened, of course, is the Conservatives came to power, cancelled all of that, cancelled the process where we would end up having a full-blown environmental assessment process, and brought back Adams mine again, which was just a travesty. It caused huge problems.

What got me into politics was fighting garbage incineration and closing down, with other citizens and politicians, an old garbage incinerator in my riding. I was known as the garbage lady of Toronto. It was not very flattering, but said in flattering terms at the time.

I thought you were going to chastise me for something, Mr Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Never.

Ms Churley: So the situation was then, and still remains, that we're far behind other jurisdictions in terms of moving forward on the other diversion tactics that are in place.

I started by saying—and I thanked them when this bill first came forward, but I'm going to mention them again. That would be Public Concern Timiskaming, the Timiskaming Band Council, Timiskaming First Nation. There are so many names, people from the area, that I'm loath to mention anybody in particular.

Well, I'm going to mention Charlie Angus, because he's running for the NDP federally in the area. Do you know what brought him into this? It was getting involved. That's what got me involved in politics too. I must say, these fights sometimes do create, after citizens taking actions, more interest in the political process and people leaping from that into politics. That's certainly, I believe, partly what spurred Charlie Angus on. He, along with some of the others, fought very hard and spent a lot of their own money and a lot of their own time coming down here to Toronto time after time, in busloads sometimes, to go to city council. Mel Lastman at city council at one point voted for it.

I remember we went there one day, my leader Howard Hampton and me, Gilles Bisson and some others, and there was quite an interesting scenario going on at city hall. The people from the area came down. Council had

voted for it, but there was an opportunity for them to revisit it. I remember that then-Mayor Mel Lastman was so mad at us that I think he called my leader and I—it was printed in the paper. I don't know if he called us "dumb" too. I think he said that Mayor Miller, before he became the mayor, said dumb things and would never become mayor, and look what happened there. But it wasn't very flattering about my leader and me being down there among the protesters. So we played a small part.

We played a small part in this House by standing up to the Tories at the time and continually pointing out the flaws and the problems, working with the citizens' groups and First Nations to show the problems. Some of the independent professors and others did independent reviews of the very flawed computer modelling that was done and the very scoped environmental assessment that was done. It was just so clear that it was flawed and shouldn't proceed.

Those people should be thanked particularly for their hard work because they're the ones who really made the difference. We became the mouthpieces in many ways for people who did a tremendous amount of hard work.

I recall that during the municipal election at that time—I think it had just been called—Charlie Angus and a bunch of other people came down and brought their guitars. They came down in buses. Jack Layton, who was then the municipal councillor in that ward in my riding, had just opened up his campaign office. They had nowhere to stay—it was a very exciting night—so we opened up the campaign office. We got them sleeping bags and food, and most of them slept there on the floor that night. People were up half the night, playing guitars and singing. They were a determined bunch of people.

We all went down to city hall the next day to fight this. Thanks to many of the councillors there, then-councillor David Miller found something within the existing agreement that made even Mel Lastman nervous. I'm not going to go into the details of that because I have too many other things to say about waste diversion.

So here we are, and the Adams mine—this bill will be passed, I'm sure—will be hopefully dead forever. It was a bad plan from day one, and it will continue to be a bad plan.

What I want to say as well—my colleague from Nickel Belt, Shelley Martel, raised this yesterday—is that here we are cancelling throwing tonnes and tonnes of garbage into the Adams mine, into water, into a man-made lake, at the same time that the federal Liberal government in Ottawa has created—I have to look here. It's a Canadian agency called the Nuclear Waste Management Organization. It was formed under the Liberal government in Ottawa and it has been looking at long-time storage options for nuclear waste somewhere in Canada. I know the federal government in Ottawa has been looking at this for a very long time.

The reason it's connected to the Adams mine debate is that we have I don't know how many hundreds of tonnes of deadly nuclear waste that has to be stored somewhere.

This agency is now again looking at—it has been looking at this for some time—storing this in underground caverns in the Canadian Shield. Some of those, as you know, are in northern Ontario. I would say, as the member for Nickel Belt said yesterday, no way is that going to be stored in the north. I know she and our northern colleagues will fight very hard for that. We've got a problem here. Where are we going to store this stuff? It should not be stored. You're going to find the same problems with the caverns in these underground mines as you did with the Adams mine. This is deadly waste that will be around for generations to come.

1540

Here we have a Liberal government, at the same time, now that it has come out with its energy plan, giving the go-ahead, the green light, for new nuclear plants. It is insane. While we sit here—

Interjection.

Ms Churley: No, no. He's talking about burning coal; we have to shut the coal plants down. But nuclear power, already, just on the basis of the cost, has proven to be not cost-effective. There are all kinds of alternatives.

Do you know what? That is not even the debate here. The debate here is: What do we do with the waste? Nobody's talking about that. The decision has been made, after all the billions and billions of dollars of cost overruns on nuclear, and they continue to happen—nobody's talking about what to do with this deadly nuclear waste.

Interjection.

Ms Churley: Now they're heckling me and harassing me, suggesting, "What are the alternatives, so why worry about it?" Adams mine is a perfect example of why we need to worry about it. We are faced with this same problem, only a much, much bigger problem: where to put this deadly waste. We're talking about building more nuclear plants that will create even more deadly waste, and we have no safe place to put it now. We're not just talking about our grandchildren; we're talking about their grandchildren. We're talking about your great-great-great-grandchildren. This is very, very serious when we're talking about leaving this kind of legacy for generations to come.

I think we need to have a debate in this House in the context of expanding nuclear plants. There are all kinds of reasons I could give and others could give as to why we shouldn't, in terms of cost-effectiveness—it isn't—and other environmental problems. Actually, nuclear plants are one of the biggest water polluters we have. Maybe the Minister of Health can take some money out of the new health care tax to deal with nuclear waste. Hey, that's a health problem. Our water is polluted by this, and we need money from somewhere to help deal with that.

We can't ignore these problems. It is easy to stand up and say, "We're going to build new nuclear plants because we need the power," and not deal with the repercussions. So I just want to put the government on

notice that this is going to turn into a very serious problem that we're going to have more debates about.

I wanted to take a little bit of time to talk about, OK, if not Adams mine, what?

This is not a prop; this is part of my discussion. I don't know if people have had an opportunity to read Ontario's 60% Waste Diversion Goal-A Discussion Paper, which just came out June 10. As you can see, I've been through it—these little yellow stickies. It's not exciting reading, but if you're interested in this, as everybody should be, it's an interesting read. There's some good stuff in it, but there are a lot of problems. That's why discussion papers, of course, are put out: for people to critique. That's what it's all about. I'm going to do a little bit of that now.

The only way we can prevent another Adams mine type of scenario, whether it is a proposal to dump waste in the ground, in a landfill; whether it's a proposal to dump it again in some form of water at some point; whether it's a proposal to expand existing landfill; whether it's a proposal to build new incinerators or gasification and other new and emerging technologies, which have to do with not diverting our waste but actually finding ways to dispose of it—we're going to have problems, no matter who's in government, from any party, political stripe. People are too aware, in this day and age, of the ramifications and implications of having those kinds of things, whether it's technology or just a hole in the ground with a good liner in it. They're not going to go for it.

That only leaves us one option, and that is to move forward far more quickly than we have on diverting waste, which they have done in other jurisdictions. We talked about it here before. Edmonton is one example, and Halifax. We know they are smaller cities; that's true. It's a little more complicated here; we have more high-rises and things, but it can be done. It has been done in Germany and other jurisdictions.

The only way we're going to prevent other really bad proposals and huge fights within communities—and that's the other piece of the problem with having these proposals in our communities. People in that community were really split, and I felt for everybody. There were people desperate for jobs and it was being proposed as job creation, although there weren't a lot of jobs. There were some jobs. Good friends and neighbours were really split. Things got ugly, and that was very unpleasant for everybody. That's another reason why, to the extent we possibly can, we need to keep these kinds of proposals from communities so that people—good neighbours and friends—don't end up being at each other's throats, which is what happened here.

For the province to meet a 60% waste diversion goal, it has to do a lot more than it's doing now. As we know, the province never met its prior target of 50% waste diversion by 2000, and then, as a consequence, landfills have imploded and garbage has to be trucked outside of our borders. This has given us an infamous reputation as a wasteful jurisdiction and as a jurisdiction that can't deal with its own waste. I'm not proud of it; I think it's

terrible. I don't blame the people in Michigan for saying that they don't want our garbage. I'm embarrassed by it. That's the situation we find ourselves in, and I think we would all agree that we have to—in fact, we're not going to have any choice in a few years. I expect, when the contract runs out, there will be no renewal of that contract.

The minister released this waste diversion discussion late last week. It outlines potential strategies to consider, and I want to discuss a few of the things in it. I don't have time to discuss it all because I will be leaving some time for my comrade-in-arms on the Adams mine, Gilles Bisson.

I want to talk a bit about industrial, commercial and institutional waste. One of the problems with this document and one of the critiques I would make is that when it comes to these kinds of waste streams, one strategy doesn't fit all. It's important to show that there are different volumes and types of waste generated by the different sectors in this category, and I'll just give you a fast and easy-to-understand example. Restaurants generate a large proportion of organic waste compared to office towers, which, of course, generate a lot of paper. So to see a visible reduction in the overall volume of ICI waste, you need to have specific programs and targets for each of the different sectors that fall under this category.

I want to talk a bit about construction and demolition waste, which is a very important one. The paper does discuss this category of waste, but in very general terms. It does not list any concrete action items for consideration pertaining to this kind of waste. So, some suggestions for this category: One is that there must be targets set, real targets set for using recycled materials in road construction, such as reclaimed aggregates, concrete and asphalt pavement. I'm certainly not alone in advocating this suggestion. I pointed this out recently at the greenbelt committee hearings.

People may not be aware of this, but the province's Environmental Commissioner has also said that Ontario is not taking full advantage of the opportunities to conserve aggregates. In his 2002-03 annual report, the commissioner analyzed that an estimated 3% of Ontario's aggregate consumption is supplied by non-virgin materials, "in great part because of the lack of incentives," such as a preferential bid system for contracts that use recycled materials.

I'd suggest that people look at the Environmental Commissioner's annual report, 2002-03. That's something that should have been acknowledged in this paper. Recommendations should be there. I'm hoping that will be included in a later updated version.

What has happened is that, as a result, there has been no government action on this since that report. The demand for cheap aggregate goes unabated.

These are the points I made in the greenbelt hearings, that what's happening is it's creating large holes in our landscape, such as the case of Dufferin Aggregates expanding into Milton quarry. This is a big hot-button issue in the area, and in my view—not everybody shares

my view, but from my perspective—it could be a disaster if it's allowed to proceed.

1550

It's currently before a joint board hearing, and that's only thanks to the efforts of groups like CONE. If it goes ahead, it will create yet again another giant hole in the Niagara Escarpment, and we all know the value of the Niagara Escarpment, not only in Canada, one of its natural treasures, but it's a designated UNESCO biosphere. I'm hoping very much that the government will put in regulations that will not require so many new holes to be dug for new materials in our very environmentally sensitive area.

I want to talk a bit about the regulatory framework. We need to really strengthen and then enforce the regulatory framework, so that the 60% diversion is actually met. Otherwise it won't happen. You can put all the words on paper, but if you don't have a strong regulatory framework, and then the resources and the enforcement put in place, it will not happen.

You have to list the series of waste management regulations currently in place, because these regulations have not been diligently enforced. That has also been one of the problems. They're not listed here. If people were aware of some of the regulations that are actually on paper, and how many of those are not being enforced, not carried through, they would understand why we're so far behind in the 50% reduction target.

For example, according to regulation 104/94, producers are to devise and implement packaging reduction work plans. There's a regulation that says that, but little, if any, real work has been done on these plans.

I understand that regulation 357 requires vendors to sell carbonated soft drinks in refillable containers. Nothing is enforced. You can't find any. Who has found any refillable pop bottle containers recently?

To put these regulations in force, the MOE needs to double its enforcement staff. This has gone hugely unnoticed in the recent budget, but there are a number of ministries in the out-years, starting in the next fiscal year, that are actually going to have huge cuts in their ministry funds, and the Ministry of the Environment is one of those.

I don't know if that means that the government is going to start making the Ministry of Health bigger and bigger, and that this new health care tax is going to expand bigger and bigger, and that we're going to see all kinds of environmental programs as well as sewer and water pipes put into that health tax, which unfortunately is being paid for by modest- and middle-income people. They're going to end up having to pay money to be put in—because this is a health issue, too. We're talking about garbage. We've got to do something with it. So you could say, I suppose, that because the Ministry of the Environment is going to be cut, I think it's 12%; I'd have to look at my notes—

Mr John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex): That's wrong.

Ms Churley: It is. Here we go again. I'm saying something here and I'll have to get the budget out to show him, to show the government that in the out-years a number of ministries are going to be cut and the Ministry of the Environment is one of those. So here we go—

Interjection.

Ms Churley: Well, then, have you changed your budget book?

Interjections.

Ms Churley: Oh, I'm teasing the bears here.

What the government needs to do is make sure that those regulations are actually adhered to, and the only way to do that is to make sure the regulations are actually enforced.

I want talk a bit about the electronic—

Applause.

Ms Churley: —I see we have another Speaker in the chair—the electronic producers, the extended producer responsibility under the Waste Diversion Act. They have to be—I'm just waiting for the Speaker to settle in and everybody to stop congratulating him. Are we done? OK.

The extended producer responsibility act—there needs to be a new bill to deal with this. The amount of e-waste is growing, and because of the compounds it contains, it constitutes another form of hazardous waste.

One of the Liberal members today was talking about next we're going see something on dealing with hazardous waste. There's nothing in this that really deals specifically with it. I, of course, have a bill—I don't know if you're aware—to deal with the electronic waste, e-waste, as it's commonly known today, and I've asked for unanimous consent on several occasions to have it passed.

I've asked for the minister's office to take a look at it. It has broad support. I have consulted out there with the generators of electronic waste. They're anxious to get on with it. They're doing some good work. They've put some money into a fund. They're doing the research, but they do need some assistance from the government right now. They're ready to move, and it is critical, because again, some of this waste stays here and goes into our landfills, and we're talking about hazardous waste, poisonous waste. An awful lot of it gets shipped to developing countries. Did you know that? Tonnes of it gets shipped out. Then it goes and poisons people in other lands and other countries.

So if the government doesn't come forward soon with a bill of its own—which, if it's adequate, a good enough bill, I will certainly support—we've got a good bill. It's my bill, and we should just pass it and get on with this.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): Let's pass your bill and get on with it.

Ms Churley: Let's pass my bill. You'd support my bill, wouldn't you? It's an e-waste bill, electronic waste bill, and, of course, the two biggies: banning organic waste and recyclables from entering landfills. I mentioned the Nova Scotia and Edmonton, examples, and other European countries, and I want to remind you again that that is the biggest problem with landfills, with our

waste. The biggest challenge we have is getting the wet out, and there are experimental programs now. Hopefully, we're going to start in my riding soon in Toronto.

I'm ready. I compost in my backyard, and many people do, but we need to make it mandatory, and we need to make it happen all across the province, because, as you know, the biggest problem with landfill is the organics. What happens is they decompose. They create this toxic soup. The leachate that goes into our water can contaminate it. It creates the smell, the seagulls—most of the problems associated with landfill come from that.

So just in that sense, if that becomes a priority and we're able to get the wet, the compostable materials out of landfill, which they've done in some other jurisdictions, then you put all of these other programs in place—refillable bottles—let's get on with making the LCBO deal with that. The time has come. We're way past that time. Let's get on with the pop industry finally agreeing to go to refillable bottles. Let's get on with the composting programs, the diversion of waste, the refillables. All of those things are critical, but the compost program, getting the organics out, is one of the most important things we can do right now.

I'm going to talk just briefly about financing the building of the waste diversion infrastructure. Again, let me point out that without an alternative place for it to go, waste will continue to collect in landfills or burn in incinerators, and we're going to continue to have communities fighting and up in arms, and governments put in disarray as a result. It's one of the hardest issues to manage, and I speak from some experience with that one. This is really where the government's commitment to this plan is going to be tested.

Without the funds to build the appropriate infrastructure, the strategies for waste diversion, particularly the organic waste, in many ways the most important diversion tactics we have to bring in, will not happen. So we need to have, after looking at other jurisdictions that do this, centralized composting facilities, and the resources have to come from the government for that to happen. It's just not going to happen overnight. All of the down-loading and other responsibilities given to municipalities, many of them—in fact, I would say none of them can afford to do this on their own, and they won't.

1600

I want to talk briefly about funding mechanisms. I do have some problems with several of the funding mechanisms being proposed. This is an important one, the self-financing through user-pay. This is discriminatory; it favours producers over the consumers.

Let me tell you why this is a problem. Just think about it. It's really unjust to penalize consumers who do not have a choice in the amount of packaging that comes with the products they purchase. Think of all the things that we buy right now, where even if we look hard to find the same product without so much packaging around it, sometimes we just have no choice. Those of us who are conscious of those things and actually do go out of our way to limit the amount of packaging we buy quite

frequently don't have a choice. So I end up, in my home, having to deal with all of the packaging, all of the waste, as a result of these products I buy, because I have no choice.

Similarly, electronics, computers and televisions are by now part of most people's everyday life, but consumers don't have any choice in selecting from electronics equipment that varies in lead content. Consumers don't have nearly as many choices.

Furthermore—let's think about this—it's regressive. It penalizes larger families and homes where multiple families reside. That's a situation common to a lot of recent immigrants establishing themselves in Canada.

So I want to say again, in successful jurisdictions that have done this, you have to replace this idea of user-pay with producer-pay. It will be a huge incentive for the producers if they have to pay for their own packaging and deal with their own packaging at the end of the lifespan of that packaging. It really does strike to the source of the problem. Only the producers can actually reduce the amount of packaging they use. So I'm very much hoping that the government will see fit—I know this is just a discussion paper—and that we can have more discussion about that.

To finish here, so I can leave some time, many municipalities have been carrying the load of responsibility in terms of waste diversion for a very long time now, and it's time for them to get the helping hand they need. Several have created, on skeleton budgets, successful waste diversion plans that the province is drawing ideas from for its own strategy.

Some of those are on their way to 60% diversion rates right now. Peterborough reports a 50% diversion rate; Wellington—

Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough): Peterborough, 50%

Ms Churley: That's right, and Wellington, 57%, but they can't do it alone any more.

Interjections.

Ms Churley: Everybody woke up. Yea. I mentioned somebody's riding—no longer just talking about waste diversion, which is a really exciting topic, isn't it? But a very important one. We should congratulate those municipalities that are doing good work.

Mr Leal: The leaders.

Ms Churley: What did you say? The leaders are—

Mr Leal: They're the leaders at 50%.

Ms Churley: Yes, that's right. They should absolutely be congratulated for the great work they're doing.

But these jurisdictions now need resources, because they really are at the forefront of any waste diversion plan. We have to rely on them to implement it and make it happen. So give them the resources they need. You can't just present them with a vision, although this vision still needs some work.

I'm sure there will be all kinds of information coming forward to the minister, which I know she will appreciate, after releasing this paper. If you have expectations mandated by law, then you have to make sure that the resources are there so that the municipalities can comply.

The last thing I want to mention, and this is always of great concern, is that the paper mentioned streamlining the approvals process for small-scale research, which is fine, but then it says "demonstration projects for new or emerging waste diversion technologies." We need make sure that the wording is changed so that it is explicit that the new and emerging technology being introduced under this waste diversion strategy is there to divert waste, not dispose of it, not burn it, because burning is a form of disposal. Waste disposal encompasses landfills and incinerations. It is extremely important to change the wording there so the whole thrust of this paper and the diversion of Ontario's garbage is about that, about diversion.

Pursuing new and emerging technologies for waste disposal encourages the behaviour that underlines the garbage problem we currently face: overconsumption and choosing the easiest path of most convenience. I'm really concerned, because in my riding of Toronto-Danforth we have been fighting garbage incineration for a number of years. It's what got me into politics, drew me into politics, because I started fighting the city of Toronto's proposal to build a large garbage incinerator. Another private company wanted to build a smaller one. We formed a group called Citizens for a Safe Environment, which, by the way, is still active. It's still out there, still fighting pollution in the area. We were on the forefront of the blue box program that came to Toronto. It's done a lot of positive work in the process of stopping garbage incineration.

There are now new kinds of incineration, and the proponents don't like it when we call it that, because they call it gasification. But it is still a process of combustion; there's just no way around that. But as I said earlier, when you start moving in that direction, we continue to see our garbage as garbage, not as resources to do other things with. The problem with moving in that direction is that it takes us down that same path: digging the hole in the ground with the liner; burning it; it goes up a stack where you have fly ash and bottom ash to deal with, some of which is very hazardous, contaminated waste. Think about it: The higher the stack, the more the smoke is dispersed and the better pollution abatement equipment you have, the more hazardous waste goes down into the fly and bottom ash.

Now, gasification is a different technology, but you still have some of the same problems. Furthermore, you continue to see garbage as garbage, and it's an easy way out. You throw it over here. Then people will lose the incentive and say, "No, no. We can just send it to the new gasification plant. Then we won't have to worry about it any more." So if we start going down that road, that's where we're going to go. We're not going to continue in this, what I think is the right path.

I'm glad that some of these issues are raised in the discussion paper, such as new and emerging technology around composting, because that's a form of diversion. Any new and emerging technology research that's going on in that area, those areas that are actually diverting the waste, I applaud, and we should move forward on those.

But let us not go down that road of looking for the easy way out, the technical way out that allows us to continue to treat our garbage as garbage, not as a resource, when so much of what we throw out, when you think about it, are actually resources that should be and can be reused, refilled, whatever, in so many ways. Composting can be used for all kinds of things. We have so much information now at our fingertips from other jurisdictions that are so far ahead of us.

That's just a short discussion on the discussion paper before us. I'll have more to say about it at a later date.

In closing, I just want to come back briefly to why I'm having this discussion, why we're having this debate, and that is that the Adams mine, I hope, is dead forever. I'm glad that the Minister of Natural Resources didn't have to resign, because he was very honourable about it. He said if his government didn't stop it, he would resign, and I was a bit worried about it for a while. I was a bit worried for him, I should say, because—

Interjection.

Ms Churley: I had some worries, because I was looking at some of the correspondence coming out of the Premier's office for a while, and some of the press releases coming out of the area. I've got them here from Timiskaming, from the Concerned Citizens group. They were quite concerned for a while that Mr McGuinty, given some of the information they were getting, was going to go ahead. So I'm really glad that the cabinet minister didn't have to resign and that he's here and we're proceeding with this.

Again, I want to end by congratulating, as I started out, all of the people from the area who fought so hard and so long, with great conviction, to stop this ridiculous, crazy plan to deal with Toronto's garbage.

1610

The Deputy Speaker: Since the member for Toronto-Danforth is sharing her time with the member for Timmins-James Bay, questions and comments will be deferred until after. So we have further debate.

Hon David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources): I'm very pleased to be able to stand in my place and finally put closure to an issue that has been long-standing, as the previous speaker from Toronto-Danforth just mentioned. Maybe I'll start where she just left off.

I certainly owe a great deal of gratitude to the people of Timiskaming, who stood shoulder to shoulder in the community in opposing this particular project. It's been a very difficult time for the people up there. The member was very supportive of our cause too, and I appreciate her help, especially when it involved Toronto city hall. The fight wasn't always just in the north but it was in Toronto too.

I should say, Mr Speaker, that I will be sharing my time with the member from Peterborough, to let you know that and get the technicalities in order.

It's interesting to note, because people aren't always aware of it, that when the city of Toronto council did vote to approve sending Toronto garbage to the Adams mine, the deal fell through about three weeks after that

vote because the proponent at the time refused to accept liability for the site and the city didn't want to take on that responsibility. I think that tells you why we're here today. If the proponent in his negotiations would not accept liability for that site, that really tells you that none of us, including the proponent, was probably very sure of the environmental viability of that particular project.

I'd like to recognize, in the members' gallery, John Vanthoff, who is one of the leaders, certainly the leader in the farming community, in the fight against the Adams mine. Thank you, John, for being here. John was the president of the federation of agriculture for the Timiskaming-Cochrane area and has quite literally put his farm on the line in fighting this, because he was bold enough to tell the truth and to do so publicly, and there are still some legal actions that hang over his head at this time. John really needs to be recognized for being the brave warrior that he is in defending the agricultural area.

That brings up a point that really needs to be mentioned, that while people would presume this was just an environmental argument, it was very much more than that. It was also an economic argument, because the little clay belt where my farm is, where I and my wife live on the Blanche River, is an area that supports about 600 farmers. It's the largest agricultural area of northern Ontario. It pumps millions of dollars into the Ontario and northern Ontario economy. One thing that's very interesting about that is that it is growing and it is sustainable. We have a great future there. With thanks probably to a bit of global climatic change and plant genetics, we are expanding the range of products we produce there. This particular project would really put that area in harm's way, and that's why the farmers were the leaders in this charge, working with environmental groups. They were defending their families, their way of life and their workplaces. That's what the fight was for them. Basically, they put their hearts and minds into that fight. John, I thank you very much for the work you did.

I think it's most appropriate that our Minister of the Environment is sitting beside John right now, because that's the next person I want to thank for bringing forward this piece of legislation.

As the official opposition states, it is a pretty serious piece of legislation. This type of legislation is not legislation that governments enter into lightly. It is the heavy hand of government, there's no doubt about it.

I have to also thank Premier Dalton McGuinty for proceeding with a piece of legislation that is very strong, that is basically taking away the use of a person's property. He's doing that because he believes it's the right thing to protect the environment of our particular area of northern Ontario, the families up there and their way of life.

Also, I think the Premier, as well as the Minister of the Environment, understands that this sort of project of finding the biggest hole in the ground and shipping up all the garbage from the country's biggest city is just not a 21st-century answer to the challenges that we have for waste disposal. This sounds more like a 1950s mega-project to me, when we really didn't think about the

environment: "Let's just find a big hole, get rid of the problem and just dump the garbage away, and we won't have to worry about it."

We're much more cognizant now of the fact of the value in our waste stream. I suppose we're just on the cusp now of dealing with emerging technologies that deal with that. I think we have a tremendous opportunity with these new technologies in getting the energy and the resources out of our waste stream.

What's left? We certainly have a lot more work to do in reducing the waste stream to begin with. I think all of us in this House have the responsibility to do that. So there's much that has to happen.

Another colleague of mine is in the House too, the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. I know he's particularly interested in this piece of legislation, because once companies such as the proponent seek out open-pit mining sites that have closed, it now puts the fear—until this bill is passed, or when it is passed—in people's minds and in communities' minds when mining companies want to develop open-pit mining operations. While our communities certainly embrace those operations, they do have a nagging thought in the back of their mind: "What's going to happen after that mine closes? After the battle that the people of Timiskaming-Cochrane fought—and the people in Quebec, from the same proponent, fought—does this mean we're going to have a waste site in our backyard after the minerals have been extracted?"

What's very good about this piece of legislation is that it does something very similar to what happened in California: to say that old mining sites cannot be used in the future for garbage dumps. Besides what we're doing here today with regard to one particular proposal, I think the legacy of this legislation and the initiative of the Minister of the Environment is that it is going to protect and enhance the mining industry, because of the knowledge of the communities now that once an open-pit mine ceases to operate, there will never again be any fear that the site could be used for a waste disposal site. That's a very good, long-lasting part of this legislation that I think is very, very important for all of the province, especially our mining industry, and is very important for northern Ontario. So I'm very pleased to see that.

I think the Adams mine process has also brought to light to the Dalton McGuinty government that we have to improve our environmental assessment process. For a project of this high risk to get as far as it did, to get the permits that it did, really shows that we're not doing the due diligence that is required to really properly assess whether these projects are environmentally sustainable or not. That it got this far is probably because the idea came from the city of North Bay and was related to people who were close to Mike Harris, two Premiers ago. I don't think, if this idea were to come forward today, that it would even be given a bit of attention. Thank God that would be the case.

I think we've learned over the last few years, as people have wrestled with these ideas, that, quite frankly,

putting garbage in the ground in a pit that bisects two aquifers is just not the proper way to dispose of garbage. I think we've learned, obviously since Walkerton, how precious our groundwater resource is and how important it is for us to protect it. Of course, that's another initiative of our government that the Minister of the Environment and the Ministry of Natural Resources are working on, groundwater source protection, because, as came out of the Walkerton inquiry, while it's very important to make sure our water treatment plants properly treat our water, we have to go back to the source of that water, whether it be the wonderful water we have in our rivers and lakes throughout this province or whether it's our underground resource, and we need to protect that too.

1620

We're doing that with nutrient management, and of course we're doing that with our source water protection processes. Those are going forward. Those are going to be done at the local level, which I think is great too, with our conservation authorities leading that in southern Ontario.

We're going to be looking at working with our sister ministry, the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines, our aboriginal communities and our municipalities in the north to find a way to make sure we protect the source water in northern Ontario also.

As I promised, I am going to share my time with my colleague the member from Peterborough. I just want to thank the members who are going to be supporting this bill. I look forward to the vote tomorrow. For sure it will be a very big day for the people of Timiskaming-Cochrane, who have fought for years against this particular project, but it will also be a very big day for the environment of this province.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Leal: It is indeed a pleasure to have the opportunity to get a bit of time to make some comments on Bill 49, the Adams Mine Lake Act.

My background is that I spent some 18 years in municipal politics, and I spent 13 years on the county-city waste management steering committee for the municipality of Peterborough. During that time, our community spent some \$6 million to extend the life of an existing landfill site called Bensfort Road. It's located in the municipality of Otonabee-South Monaghan.

Through that experience, I came to the conclusion that the burying of waste is a very archaic method of handling it, that we must find something different; we must explore new technologies to address the problem.

I know that this government will be looking at ways of diverting particular organic waste from our waste stream, indeed perhaps looking at the notion of centralized composting through our communities throughout Ontario.

I've always been particularly pleased that the city of Peterborough has a long history of recycling. Indeed, the member from Davenport this afternoon indicated that we have one of the highest diversion rates in the province of Ontario, at some 50%, and we do that through recycling, through the blue box program. We do it by having an

extensive green waste pickup by our municipal employees in that area.

We also have a backyard composting program that has been phenomenally successful. When you look at backyards of many houses in Peterborough, you'll see backyard composters, that people, through an extensive education program, are using it on a daily basis, again helping us to achieve that goal of a 50% diversion rate.

But it really goes back to the early 1970s. In Peterborough, we had set up a volunteer recycling program of newspapers. One of the people who spearheaded that program is our current member of Parliament, Mr Peter Adams, a member who has served the constituents with great distinction since 1993. I know he'll be very successful again on June 28. Mr Adams has been a leader in our community in various capacities.

But looking forward, it has been a Liberal government that has always been on the forefront of making changes to how we handle waste in Ontario. I recall I was a special assistant to a cabinet minister in the 1980s when the Honourable Jim Bradley, then Minister of the Environment, was the fellow who took a leadership role to bring the blue box program to the province of Ontario. We'll be ever in gratitude to Minister Bradley that he had great foresight then to bring that program to Ontario that all municipalities now are involved with. At that time, Minister Bradley provided financial assistance for those municipalities that wanted to get on board.

Also in Peterborough, we have a group that has been headed by a gentleman by the name of Mr Ed McLellan. Mr McLellan has been doing extensive studies in the whole concept of energy from waste. He is a retired engineer from General Electric Peterborough and he has put together a group of citizens to explore that alternative.

One of the sites he has looked at, which some will be familiar with, is the Ontario Power Generation site of Wesleyville, Ontario, near Port Hope. That was abandoned some years ago and it's thought it might be a prospective site for an energy-from-waste operation modelled on the very successful plant in Syracuse, New York, that is operated by American Refuel, a state-of-the-art energy-from-waste operation that puts electricity back into the grid.

I want to spend a moment talking about property rights. My friends in the opposition talked about that at length, about how they couldn't support this bill because of property rights. My friend for Perth-Middlesex talked about it the other day. I'll talk for a moment just to recap that issue.

In 1982 the Prime Minister of the day, Mr Trudeau, put property rights on the table during the constitutional discussions. Three Premiers—Mr Davis of Ontario, Mr Lyon from Manitoba and Mr Lougheed from Alberta—wanted no part of a property rights discussion. The reason why? The enshrinement of property rights in the Constitution would have made it extremely difficult for provinces to acquire corridors for new roads, for hydro corridors, and it would have been virtually impossible for

municipalities to acquire rights-of-way for new sewer and watermain projects. So that was abandoned quite quickly.

This past Monday, I had the opportunity and the honour to participate in the Ontario Aboriginal Chiefs Conference. Attorney General Michael Bryant spoke on behalf of the government, indicating that a new era has begun in terms of our relationships with First Nations. I'd like get on the record that Chief Greg Cowie of Hiawatha was the host of this conference. I had the pleasure of meeting Charles Fox, who is the current chair of the aboriginal chiefs conference. One of the things that's on their agenda is talking about the broad determinants of health, and that being clean water. I was concerned today during question period when I heard the opposition kind of skate around this issue, not understanding that fundamentally the provision of clean water is a great determinant to health.

In 1981, I had the opportunity to visit the Tri-town area of Cobalt, Haileybury and New Liskeard. A friend of mine whom I was in university with, Rick Campbell, was getting married in New Liskeard. I had the opportunity at that time to tour the little clay belt area, an area that is noted throughout this province of having one of the great dairy operations. On May 21, I had the opportunity to participate in the committee hearings and to hear John Vanthoff speak on behalf of the Timiskaming Federation of Agriculture.

I will get some of his comments that day on the record: "The Timiskaming Federation of Agriculture represents 400 farmers in an area known as the little clay belt. The clay belt was actually an ancient glacial lake bottom. It's about 200,000 acres in size, and Lake Timiskaming is a remnant of that ancient lake." He presented photos of some of the farm operations in the area. "The agriculture sector in Timiskaming contributes over \$130 million annually to the area's economy in direct and indirect sales. Over 1,000 jobs are directly dependent on agriculture in the little clay belt."

I know from my experience, having participated in the area waste management, that indeed every landfill site leaks leachate. You can't help it. It doesn't matter if you're in southern Ontario and use natural clay as a continuation barrier, or in other areas of the province you may use plastic liners. In the Adams mine case, it's using an open pit mine and hoping the rock formations would contain the leachate.

But you and I both know that leachate escapes. What troubled me about this was by having this operation in Timiskaming, in having this operation at the Adams mine, we were potentially going to leave one of the terrible legacies in the province of Ontario, actually destroying one of the best agricultural operations in Ontario. I can't understand why all parties in this House would want to see us jeopardize that area of farming in the New Liskeard area. Frankly, it's appalling that we wouldn't be standing in unison to support this legislation.

I was concerned yesterday when I heard the member from Lanark-Carleton—I understand he's both a lawyer

and an engineer—trying to claim that engineering studies say there are not going to be any leachate leaks from this particular landfill site. At the end of the day, that just doesn't hold.

I was interested to hear my friend the member for Simcoe North, who I think has a legitimate concern with regard to site 41 in his area, knowing full well that it has the same kind of problems that may occur with this site.

I wholeheartedly support Bill 49. I think it's a positive thing for Ontario and a positive thing for this community.

1630

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): It's a privilege to rise and make a few comments relating to the presentation from the minister—the member for Timiskaming-Cochrane—and the member for Peterborough in relation to Bill 49, the Adams Mine Lake Act. I appreciate the comments about the esteemed president of the Timiskaming Federation of Agriculture, who is directly related to me, being my nephew. I was very happy to hear the comments made about his presentation.

What I really want to point out in the presentation that Mr Vanthoff made—I had the opportunity to be at the committee hearing in Milton, and the part that was so important to me was what he said that the members opposite didn't mention. He made the point that stopping the garbage from going into the Adams mine shouldn't be done through legislating it out, that it should be proven through the process that's in place that it's the wrong place to put garbage, that that type of garbage disposal will not work. He made a very intricate display of how the hydraulics of the site would work and that the lake beyond the Adams mine site would in fact get some of the leachate in it if you filled that mine. But none of that is going to be heard or seen. We are not going to go through the process again.

It would seem to me more appropriate if the minister had developed another hearing or had another extended hearing to point out the fallacies of putting garbage there, rather than override all the rules. Now no one will be looking to site another landfill site, because we have no assurance that if we go through the process and get an approval, in the end we could use the site for waste disposal. Why would anybody go through the process that's presently in Ontario if this can happen at the end of that process? I think it would have served us well if a new process had been put in place prior to this happening so we could do all those things people said: "Find other places for garbage to go, because some day we're going to run out of a place to put it."

Ms Churley: I was really very remiss in not mentioning Mr John Vanthoff, who is the president of the Timiskaming Federation of Agriculture. I saw him sitting over there and he looked familiar, but it has been a while; I haven't seen him in a while. My eyesight isn't what it used to be, but I'm very pleased to see John here today, and I want to take this opportunity—among the others I mentioned from the area earlier—to give special acknowledgement to him.

This must be a good day for him. I know he worked very hard and took many risks to try to reveal to the government of the day and the citizens of Toronto and Timiskaming the flaws in this system. That was his whole approach, it is true, a very reasonable approach and very different from mine. My position was, "This is bad news. We don't need to have a full environmental assessment. The whole idea is crazy to dump garbage in a lake, with crevices in the rock where the leachate can happen." Anyway, he took the position and he made it very clear.

He was the one, as I understand it, who commissioned this independent review and critical analysis of the hydrogeological investigations. He commissioned Professor Ken Howard, a university professor and groundwater consultant, to do this independent study on the government's process. He is a very skilled person who sent information that showed very clearly that the process was flawed, that the EA process was flawed, that the computer modeling was flawed. What he was asking for was for it at least to be a proper process. I know he took a lot of risks, and I want to congratulate and thank him as well for all the work that he did on behalf of the rest of the farmers in Timiskaming.

Ms Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): I'm pleased to rise today to speak to third reading of this bill and to comment on the comments made by the Minister of Natural Resources and the member for Peterborough, the member for Oxford and the member for Toronto-Danforth.

I, too, would like to acknowledge John here in the gallery today, whom I've had many opportunities to speak to about cattle farming in northern Ontario. John, I commit to you that I will continue to work with you to convince your uncle, the member for Oxford, that what we're doing in this legislation is absolutely the right thing to do.

As most of the members in the House know, I was born and raised in northern Ontario and I'm very proud of it. I can only tell you that, during the election campaign of last fall, I heard from many concerned citizens in Nipissing about the Adams mine project, about what it was going to do to the north, how it would affect our environment, our neighbourhood, our lakes, our rivers.

I spoke last time about one particular individual I met with who was a retired miner who was very concerned about the leakage of the mine and who—having been working in those mines in northern Ontario, I thought he was well placed to advise me on this—spoke without a doubt of the fact that that would leak and that it was inappropriate to be dumping garbage in Adams mine. I wholeheartedly agreed with him.

I am so delighted today to speak in support of the Minister of Natural Resources, David Ramsay, who fought so hard against this project and, on behalf of the citizens of Nipissing and of his riding, was an eloquent advocate against this project from the very beginning. There were many supporters in my riding of this project, I have to tell you, but there were many more who were

very deeply concerned and raised those concerns with me over the last few months. They are very pleased with the legislation that we have before the House today and are very pleased to see that this project is coming to an end once and for all and that the pristine natural resources of northern Ontario will be protected for all to enjoy, for all of us and our children, in the future.

Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): We are here to discuss, and the member for Peterborough has ably presented the case for, this bill, the Adams mine site. I sometimes, in sitting here, question—and the viewers must question, too, with the important things going on in regard to the budget—why we are discussing at this time one of the possible alternatives for Toronto's garbage. We, in the city of Cambridge, see hundreds of trucks a week passing by our highway on the way to our friendly state of Michigan in order to dump Toronto's garbage because they have not come up with a decent proposal and have decided upon doing something about their own garbage. So we end up with that status.

Here we are discussing preventing the filling of an artificial hole somewhere in the north, and I don't think that's the priority we should be looking at. We have repeatedly asked this government to have public hearings in regard to the budget so that individuals who phone my office can come before a committee of this Legislature to talk about their health. They can talk about why they need chiropractic care, which has been taken away from them without notice. Seniors want to come before a committee of this House to ask you why you have taken the physiotherapy that they rely upon to be productive citizens.

Those are my priorities, and I ask the government to consider their position.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Peterborough has two minutes to reply.

1640

Mr Leal: I certainly appreciate the comments of the member from Cambridge and others, Ministers Dombrowsky and Ramsay, but you know, we campaigned on improvements to Ontario's environment.

Over the last eight years, in my view and others' on this side of the House, environmental concerns were put on the back burner. Now we have been given a mandate to bring new direction to address these environmental concerns in the province of Ontario. The Adams mine bill is part of that new approach, where we fundamentally see it as wrong to put waste in a landfill site that has potential to leak leachate and actually destroy an economic base in northern Ontario. For us, that's a concern.

Minister Bartolucci is an able representative of the north. The previous government had no northern cabinet ministers. Now we have northern cabinet ministers. We listen to them and we know that the area of New Liskeard is fundamental to the long-term health for the province of Ontario and, in particular, northern Ontario.

There's some other information floating around that's just not correct. When you look at the budget for the Ministry of the Environment, under the previous Con-

servative regime they had allocated \$260 million. This year, under the leadership of Minister Dombrowsky, it's increasing to \$304 million. I know I'm from Peterborough and I learned my math in an elementary school in the south end of Peterborough, but I would think we would all conclude that that's an increase in the Ministry of the Environment's budget, not a decrease, as some others have tried to concoct this afternoon.

Indeed the environment is a priority of this government, will continue to be a priority, and this government will be a leader in the environment for the people of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): Thank you very much for the opportunity today to speak to Bill 49, An Act to prevent the disposal of waste at the Adams Mine site and to amend the Environmental Protection Act in respect of the disposal of waste in lakes. That's the title of this bill. It could also be called the Oak Ridges moraine Liberal CYA bill; it could also be called the David Ramsay save-my-career bill. But for the purpose of what is being tabled in this Legislature, it is called An Act to prevent the disposal of waste at the Adams Mine site and to amend the Environmental Protection Act in respect of the disposal of waste in lakes.

We have some significant problems with this bill, and the possible titles indicate what some of those problems could be. I'm sure you understand that. This bill is all about politics. It is not about science; it's all about politics. If that's how we are going to make these kinds of decisions, we're in for a rough ride for sure in the province. The people of Ontario will not be served the way they should be served by this Legislature if our only motivation is, "What do we need to do to get ourselves out of political trouble or to create a diversion from a potential political problem that we've created?"

For example, when the government was elected, they had run on a promise of shutting down all development on the Oak Ridges moraine, and in fact they knew at that time that the contracts were already in place. No self-respecting developer would have entered into any kind of agreement without some protection, so in case a government changed its mind on the project, they would be compensated for their losses and their investment.

This government probably could have brought in a piece of legislation, such as they've done on the Adams mine, and just pulled the rug out from under those developers. But they were not about to tackle the developers with regard to the Oak Ridges moraine in the same way they were willing to tackle the developers and the investors in the Adams mine project, because they knew the cost of that decision would have been substantially more to the taxpayer, and the legal bills and the time it would have taken. So they made the decision, "OK, we're going to make a bit of a sweetheart deal and we're going to beg and cajole you to take 900 less homes on the moraine and we're going to put it through. But I can assure you that within a week or so we're going to

have a bill tabled in the Legislature to shut down the Adams mine because we've got to do something to placate the environmental lobby in the province of Ontario." There's the development side of it. They just took that rug and ripped it out from under the feet of those people and left them basically no recourse.

If I could quote the preamble of the bill: "The bill revokes...." Well, we'll go back to that a little later. But the next paragraph is, "The bill extinguishes certain causes of action that may exist in respect of the Adams mine site or the adjacent lands. (See section 5 of the bill.)"

In short, they're going to dictate what kind of compensation these people will get. The government is going to set the amount. They are removing any right—and I stress that word "right," because we cherish rights in the province of Ontario. They are extinguishing any right of these people to challenge the government's decision with regard to compensation. Now, where could that lead?

I do want to stop for one second, because I also want to recognize Mr John Vanthoff. I've never met Mr Vanthoff. But, as of right now, I think he will be the most mentioned person in Hansard today, and I would be remiss if I didn't get in on the act. I want to mention Mr John Vanthoff from the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, up in David Ramsay's riding of Timiskaming-Cochrane, I believe.

Mr Wilkinson: Tell him how you're going to vote against this bill.

Mr Yakabuski: I am definitely going to vote against this bill, John, so you may not be smiling at me in 20 minutes or whatever time I've got left. I will definitely be voting against this bill, because I can't vote in favour of a bill that extinguishes the rights of people basically to own private property. Where is the next step? I have some real concerns about where the next step is, if this bill is enacted into law.

Again, it's all about politics. This government has certainly done some things with respect to effects on my riding that are politically motivated only; for example, the failure to reinstate the spring bear hunt—a terrible decision, totally political.

Now, the Minister of Natural Resources is very much in favour of this bill. In fact, this bill is his political salvation. It was more important than his promise to do everything he could to see that the spring bear hunt was reinstated. The Minister of Northern Development and Mines was also a proponent of the spring bear hunt. But they were willing to make certain concessions to satisfy the powers that be in their party, the Toronto members who really do control the caucus, such as Greg Sorbara, the Minister of Finance. So it's all about politics.

Where does it end up? Are they about to extinguish my property rights or your property rights because they decide that it's good politics to do so? That's a real concern on my part today, that the Ministry of the Environment could simply shut you down.

With respect to the suitability of the Adams mine as a waste disposal site, this property had gone through all of

the environmental assessments. It had received approvals. Then those were appealed, and they were approved. Quite conceivably, it may have been the best place to put garbage. It was the most judged and considered with regard to how many questions had to be answered and how many conditions had to be met. It may have been the most suitable place to put garbage that would ever have been approved in this province, because no piece of property was subjected to the kind of scrutiny that that piece of property was. So in the end, it was approved.

The city of Toronto actually had planned to put their garbage there. They actually had voted to put their garbage there. That's a pile of garbage: somewhere in the neighbourhood—I don't have the exact amount—of 125 or so trucks, tractor-trailers, of garbage a day going to Michigan.

1650

What has this government done to ensure that if the government of Michigan—there are all kinds of legislators in Michigan who oppose the fact that they accept Toronto's garbage. They could shut that border down at any time. They have no contingency plan in place to deal with that should that happen. This government has gone ahead and closed one door. They've closed the front door to the house and they didn't even build a door on the back. So where are they going to go? What happens if the government of Michigan says no to Toronto's garbage?

Garbage is a municipal responsibility, but you guys are the ones who have shut the door. By closing off this mine you have, by extension, accepted responsibility for the garbage of Toronto. By the fact that you have closed off that option of putting garbage in the Adams mine, you have said, as the province, "We will be responsible for the garbage that is produced by the city of Toronto." If something happens to that, it's your fault. You will be responsible for it, you will have to deal with it, and the city of Toronto can wash their hands. That could create one heck of a stink—no pun intended.

I want to talk about some of the other things. We're going to come back to the Adams mine specifically, but I want to talk about a couple of other things I have concerns about with respect to other Ministry of the Environment decisions.

Regulation 170/03: That's a big one for me and a big one for all the rural members, including the Liberal rural members. It is a mess, and it's going to create a mess for businesses, community halls, churches, children's camps and everybody else in rural Ontario. Essentially what they're forcing us to do—it's all part of this tragedy of Walkerton that got so politicized because members of the opposition at that time tried to make this the stake through the heart of the government of the day. They wanted to destroy the government, because incompetent people who lied and falsified records in a treated water system caused it, committed actions that led to the deaths of seven people.

The issue got so politicized that Dennis O'Connor was commissioned to write a report. He came up with these

recommendations to, in my opinion, make Ontario water—it was a utopian hope that we could guarantee the safest water anywhere in heaven or on earth. In a perfect world, they thought they could create those circumstances and that situation.

As you know, Mr Speaker, and I know, we don't live in a perfect world. But now we've taken this regulation 170/03, which is part of Bill 195, which all the Liberals voted for and the government of the day passed, and they all failed to see what the ramifications of implementation of this legislation was going to be across Ontario. Now what has happened is that there is a terrible mess created for rural people, rural businesses, rural community halls, churches etc.

The minister, and I give her credit for it, has taken a step back and said we're going to take a look at this for six months. I appreciate her new—her original parliamentary assistant was Dominic Agostino who, as you know, passed away earlier this year, and we certainly all miss his presence here. But she has a good one now in John Wilkinson from Perth-Middlesex, and I'm hopeful that he's going to inject some common sense into this. I'm going to be talking to John a lot over the next few months on behalf of the people in my riding and across all of rural Ontario, because we need to see some changes.

Some things are on the horizon right now with respect to the children's camps, for example. It's a numbers game. If you have nine people in the camp, basically what they're saying is, "We're not that worried about you." But if you bring in number 10, "Oh, we're very worried about you. Now you're coming under our legislation." The whole world changes. When you pick arbitrary numbers like this—it also happens with wells.

I have a letter here from a lady. I haven't talked to her today, so I'm not going to use her name, but she's from Renfrew in a development called Pleasant View Park, a mobile home park where there are about 25 units. Of course, they fall under the category of six to 6,000 homes. If there are five homes on that well, the government is basically saying—I don't know if I can say this, Mr Speaker; you'll correct me if I can't—"We don't give a damn about you." But if you're now the sixth home on that well, "We are going to control your life." All of a sudden, they start to care about you. It's not because they care about you, just as I'd like to believe that it wasn't because they didn't care about you when you were only number five, but they establish these arbitrary numbers that are ridiculous, and all because of what happened with the Koebel boys in Walkerton.

Testing used to be done by health units. Now you've got to have the Ministry of the Environment approve all these methods and you've got to have certified people to come in and do the testing. We're talking about rural Ontario. We're not talking about downtown Toronto or Ottawa where you have all kinds of qualified people.

The Deputy Speaker: I know in closing—you're getting near the end—the member is going to come back to Bill 46.

Mr Yakabuski: Certainly so, Mr Speaker, and the environment is a big issue that we try to get around sometimes. We try to cover all the bases.

But this 170/03—and I appreciate the latitude because it all ties in, you'll see, in the end—is going to be devastating to these people in rural Ontario.

Children's camps: If you're drawing your water from a surface source which is a lake, sorry, July 1, 2004, you're under the gun. If you're drawing it from a well, you've got to apply for some extensions and they've got to know what your plan is and this and that, but most likely they'll give you an extension.

Where the common sense is lacking here is the government thinks they can control everything. The government's going to bring in a water regulation on a children's camp and they're going to make you safe. Well, most of the members of this House either have children or know somebody who has children, and all of these children have swum and played in a lake. Here's the funny part of it. I know my children, when they swim and play in the lake—

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): Do they know you?

Mr Yakabuski: Yes, I hope they still know me. When they swim and play in the lake, they go down underwater and they're up and they're down and they're in there all day. They drink about a quart and a half every hour right out of the lake. Are we now going to put some sort of meter on them? Are we going to put a chlorinator on them to make sure that as they're diving in and out of that lake they're not catching something? We live in the real world, and we're trying to make it perfect by all kinds of artificial means that really put an undue burden on people who are trying to make life more enjoyable for your children and mine. So this kind of approach is just heavy-handed. The government's going to control everything. Do you know what? When it comes to rural Ontario, it just doesn't work.

1700

I worked in Algonquin Park in the summer of 1976—spent the whole summer in there. I drank water out of the lake, untreated, never boiled it for the whole summer, and I was never ill once.

We live in a country where the water is the best in the world, but we have created a collective paranoia about water in this province. We've got more fresh water than any country in the world here in Canada, and we've created a collective paranoia. People walking down the streets of this province are afraid to drink the water because the government of the day, which was the opposition at that fateful time that Walkerton was struck, created such a political furor over that mess that they have created this collective paranoia across the province about water. Everybody feels you can't drink the water now; you've got to buy it in a bottle off the shelf. You know what? You've no way of knowing what the safety of that water is, but we're going to tell all the rural people in the province of Ontario, "We're going to make your water safe."

You can't do it. You'll never be able to guarantee it, but you'll regulate people to death. You'll price them out of their own businesses. You'll force them out of business. Then what do you have for an economy in rural Ontario when you can't even get the tourists up there because nobody can afford to operate a camp? Nobody can afford to operate because your regulations are putting them out of business.

I'm running out of time here, and I know that I want to spend most of my time on Bill 49, the Adams mine act, which is important. I oppose that legislation for some—I can't even take a break for water right now, Mr Speaker, because I'm down to my last five minutes.

The Deputy Speaker: Less than that.

Mr Yakabuski: The Adams mine act extinguishes people's rights only for political purposes, and that's a shameful thing for this government to do.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Bisson: I want to talk about the water regulations that he talked about that are related to the Adams mine act. I know they're directly related because we know it's an aquifer.

I've just got to say, I agree with him with regard to the comments he makes about the frustration of municipalities, small business owners, trailer park owners etc, who are really frustrated by the water regulations. I want to remind you, however, that the water regulations were created under your government. I agree that maybe you guys, now late in the game, are saying they've got to be changed, but I want to remind you where they came from. We can't let that go without a comment.

Mr Yakabuski: I recognize that, Gilles.

Mr Bisson: You recognize it? OK, very good.

But the first step—and that was my point—to being able to deal with an issue is to admit that maybe we made a mistake.

On the water regulations, I've just got to say, it is horrendous. This government's got to get the bull by the horns and deal with the water regulations. Nobody in Ontario disagrees that we need to have water regulations that ensure we have safe drinking water in the province of Ontario. The problem is, who's going to pay for it?

Unless the province of Ontario is prepared to put up the billions of dollars it's going to take to make everybody compliant, I fail to see why we should pass that responsibility on to individual property owners, small business owners and municipalities across the north.

Communities across this province in northern Ontario, as the Minister of Northern Development and Mines knows, are beside themselves figuring out how they're going to be able to upgrade their water systems to meet the new water regulations, not to mention trailer parks, motel units and restaurants that are on private water systems.

I say to the government, we need to think through what we're going to do. If there is a problem, let's deal with it, but let's not deal with it in such a way that it

becomes overwhelming when it comes to our ability to meet—without having to spend billions to get there.

Mr Wilkinson: I'm more than happy to speak about the comments made by the good member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke. I appreciate those kind words that he had toward me.

He decided in this debate to bring up regulation 170, which our ministry has to deal with, which was created by the former government. It comes to a question of regulation, and I want the member to listen to this, because there's a theory that goes around that somehow people should be regulating themselves, that government regulation is somehow evil. I always tell people, "It's like this: The argument you propose is like a person going down the 401. That person's going 130, maybe 135 kilometres an hour"—

Mr Baird: Not John.

Mr Wilkinson: Not John; not the member. Not that member. Let's just say, any member of this House would be driving down the highway and going 135 clicks—

Mr Baird: You're not allowed to talk about issues that are before a court.

Mr Wilkinson: This is hypothetical. He looks down and sees that he's going 135. What he decides to do is slow down to 100, drive along the 401 until he finds a police officer, flag down the police officer and say, "Officer, I was going 135. Give me a ticket." That's what self-regulation says. That's your idea.

The problem we had in Walkerton is that people who were supposed to do their job were not trained and did not do it. The responsibility of the provincial government was to regulate them. The people who were supposed to inspect them were fired. The government that was supposed to keep an eye on these people and not trust them to self-regulate—

Interjection.

Mr Wilkinson: Not for people who were supposed to—

Mr Baird: Jim Bradley grandfathered them.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Nepean-Carleton.

Mr Wilkinson: Those people were not going to let themselves in, and that is why we fundamentally disagree. But we'll fix regulation 170 because we're rural brethren, and we have to do that.

The Deputy Speaker: Further questions and comments?

Mr Baird: Thank you very much, Speaker. You did a great job in question period today; everyone's talking about it.

I am pleased to respond to the speech by the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke. I think he very admirably made the case for property rights and what an egregious piece of legislation this is. I say to the people watching, it may not be you who are affected today by the heavy hand of government, but it could be any one of us who could be the next target of a government gone wild.

This is just for political purposes to prop up Liberal fortunes in one part of the province and make them appear like they've got some sort of strong environmental record. As the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke said, "They have no plan on how to do waste disposal."

I'm going to quote this quote back: "If those borders close, don't think you're bringing Toronto's garbage to Nepean." We need a plan to deal with it that is province-wide and it should be investigated.

You have, in the case of the Adams mine, some very well-respected business people here in Ontario, people who have created a lot of jobs in the province, people who have been good corporate citizens. What's being done to them through that piece of legislation is nothing short of an abomination.

I think the member certainly spoke to these issues very well. I want to congratulate him on his excellent speech, and say that I will be voting against this egregious violation of civil liberties and will not support the legislation. I want to congratulate the member for the usual high standard of discourse that he brings to this place through his intervention.

Mr Arthurs: I can't believe that the members opposite would actually stand in their places and try to defend that, for years to come, they would allow, condone, encourage and support people standing on the shore of a lake and taking bags of garbage and tossing them into the lake, day in and day out.

Mr Baird: It's a pit.

Mr Arthurs: If you can water-ski in it, it must be a lake. Let's not confuse the issue with pits and lakes full of water. That's a lake. That's no way to treat the environment.

It's also not going to resolve the problems in the GTA or elsewhere with respect to waste management. We've proven that in the past. Taking the garbage to northern Ontario and dropping it into someone else's property is not going to do what has to happen here in the greater Toronto area to deal with the waste.

What's going to have to happen is that folks here in the GTA are going to have to do what's happening in Peterborough and elsewhere, and that's manage their waste more effectively locally; raise diversion rates so that there's very little or no waste left. It's happening in communities throughout the GTA.

1710

I can tell you that, as of this week, the first of the small, green, 20-litre wet waste containers arrived at my doorstep. So my municipality, my community, my neighbourhood, my family now have the opportunity to take our wet waste—not just our recyclables, not just the cans, not just the bottles, not just the paper but the wet waste—and package it separately so it can be composted effectively. The amount of stuff that's actually left on the curb is decreasing and decreasing. That's how we're going to solve the waste problem—not taking the waste north, standing on the shore of the lake with garbage bags and throwing it in and watching it splash.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Ted Arnott): The member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke has two minutes to reply.

Mr Yakabuski: Oh, so much to reply to and so little time. I wanted to thank the members from Timmins-James Bay, Perth-Middlesex, Nepean-Carleton and Pickering-Ajax. I'm going to start with the member for Perth-Middlesex.

I did just want to point out that if he was driving down the 401 at 135, he'd better get out of the way, because if you're not driving 140, you're driving too slowly. That's the reality of driving in Ontario, but that's a discussion for another day. In the left lane, you've got to be driving just to keep up.

Mr Leal: At 140 through Peterborough?

Mr Yakabuski: No. That's another story, Jeff.

I do want to talk about the member for Pickering-Ajax as well. You know, the Adams mine, calling it a pit, a lake or whatever—we do have to find ways of dealing with our garbage and we have to find ways other than burying it. But if you're going to bury it, that's the best place to bury it right now. But we've got to get our heads out of the sand and start talking. We've got to start talking in this country, learning from the Europeans and start dealing with the incineration of waste.

The incineration of waste is the right way to go, but no one in the government wants to talk about it. We have wet waste composting, generating electricity from the incineration of waste—those are some other things we've got to do, but we have got to start talking seriously about the incineration of waste in this country and in this province if we're going to deal with it. We can't keep finding new places to bury the garbage. With the environmental assessments that are needed and everything else, nobody will get involved in that. Nobody's going to make the investment into trying to find one because it's too expensive, especially if the government can pull the rug out from under them, just like they did with the developers in the Adams mine.

So we have to get prepared for the future, be prepared to deal with garbage in a responsible way and not run away from burning it. Thank you very much.

M. Bisson: C'est toujours un plaisir d'être ici avec vous cet après-midi pour parler de ce projet de loi.

Je voudrais dire premièrement que le caucus NPD va supporter ce projet de loi. Cela a déjà été mentionné à la deuxième lecture, mais je pense que c'est important encore de le mentionner une fois qu'on arrive à la troisième lecture.

On a toujours cru que toute l'initiative qui était mise en place par le gouvernement conservateur, originalement par le gouvernement de M. Peterson, pour être capable d'amener les déchets à Kirkland Lake, a toujours été, quant à nous autres, les néo-démocrates, et je pense aussi pour les citoyennes et citoyens de la région non seulement de Kirkland Lake et les environs mais aussi de Toronto, une approche qui, franchement, ne faisait pas de bon sens. Je vais expliquer pourquoi.

Premièrement, on comprend tous qu'à la fin de la journée Toronto a un problème comme l'ont d'autres municipalités. On a besoin d'être dans une situation—excusez-moi; on est dans une situation—dans la ville de Toronto comme dans d'autres villes où il y a un vrai manque de capacité de se débarrasser—c'est beau quand on parle le français, madame. Je vous vois. Vous écoutez très bien. C'est un vrai problème de capacité qu'on a—if you only knew what that was all about. On a dans des villes comme Toronto un manque de capacité de se débarrasser des déchets dans les poubelles soit dans nos maisons, nos industries ou dans d'autres édifices dans la ville de Toronto.

L'approche de prendre les vidanges et de les envoyer dans le nord, à une mine qu'on appelle la mine Adams, et de les enterrer dans la terre ne fait pas de bon sens sur le point environnemental, parce qu'on sait, comme on dit en anglais, « Out of sight, out of mind. » On se trouve dans une situation où les cités comme Toronto sont allouées de dire, « On a un problème, et pour régler le problème, on va envoyer nos déchets quelque part dans le nord. » Ça veut dire qu'on prend le problème et on le transfère quelque part d'autre où on ne le voit pas. Quand on ne le voit pas, il n'y a pas de nécessité dans les cités comme Toronto de dire, « Mais peut-être que nous autres, on doit prendre la responsabilité. » On a peut-être besoin de regarder comment établir d'une manière agressive des programmes de recyclage pour la ville de Toronto, comment s'organiser pour avoir moins de déchets aller dans nos dépotoirs. On pourrait dire, par exemple, « Quand je m'en vais acheter un paquet de batteries au magasin, ou des lames de rasoir, est-ce que j'ai besoin d'un gros paquet comme ça pour une petite affaire comme ça? » On a besoin de regarder à ces questions et dire que, comme une société, on a peut-être une responsabilité, que le gouvernement provincial, avec les municipalités, mette en place des règlements et des lois qui disent premièrement, « Réduisons le besoin d'utiliser les dépotoirs », et on fait ça en rendant moins grands les paquets quand on vend des produits. On regarde au recyclage. On regarde comment on peut utiliser d'une manière plus efficace la technologie pour être capable de réduire le besoin d'utiliser les dépotoirs.

Envoyer les vidanges à Kirkland Lake, sur l'autre bord, est un problème pour la communauté aussi. Le gouvernement dit, « C'est la communauté, ce sont eux autres qui s'intéressent à avoir les vidanges. » C'est possible qu'à Kirkland Lake, oui, il y a eu un référendum, et la ville de Kirkland Lake a voté oui pour accepter les vidanges de Toronto. Mais il n'y avait pas une autre communauté dans les environs qui était directement affectée parce que la mine Adams, comme vous le savez, n'est pas à Kirkland Lake. Elle est en dehors de la ville de Kirkland Lake, dans un autre « township », un autre canton, comme on dit, et ces cantons-là et d'autres villes y étaient totalement opposés.

Pourquoi? On a des terres agricoles dans cette région qui sont parmi les meilleures qu'on trouve dans la province. On s'est trouvé dans une situation où il y

avait une très grande possibilité, si on commençait à apporter les vidanges de Toronto à la mine Adams, qu'avec le temps l'eau qui rentrait dans la mine Adams des roches des environs, l'eau qui est dans la terre, aurait pu traverser des territoires et polluer le système d'eau, les aquifères, dans cette région. Pour les terres agricoles dans le coin c'était un gros problème.

C'est pour ça qu'on a vu une très grande organisation contre ce projet. Les agriculteurs, les citoyens—non seulement les environnementalistes—ont parlé très fort contre ce projet. Ils se sont organisés contre ce projet parce qu'ils croyaient que ce n'était pas la manière, premièrement, dont Toronto doit s'organiser pour se défaire de son problème de déchets, mais plus important, on avait besoin de reconnaître qu'il n'était pas une bonne idée de transférer notre problème d'une municipalité à l'autre et de donner le problème à quelqu'un d'autre quand ça vient à l'effet sur l'environnement.

Cela a pris beaucoup de monde. Premièrement, il faut remercier tous ceux qui s'y sont impliqués dans la ville de Toronto et le monde dans le nord qui s'y sont impliqués, qui ont travaillé des années contre ce projet. Je pense à du monde comme Terry Graves, qui a travaillé très fort dans le coin, à Charlie Angus, qui est présentement notre candidat néo-démocratique à Timmins-Baie James et qui était une des personnes-clés sur le projet. On regarde M. Bélanger de la ville de Earlton, qui était organisée, et j'en passe, il y en avait tant—moi-même, M. Ramsay. À un point, M. Ramsay était pour. Il était contre, il était pour et il était contre encore. Finalement il est tombé sur le bon bord et va l'accepter, mais à la fin de la journée cela a pris les efforts de beaucoup, beaucoup de citoyens dans la province, beaucoup de monde pour bâtir, finalement, une atmosphère qui faisait qu'il était impossible pour un gouvernement de continuer avec ce projet. Je veux dire, de la part de nous ici à l'Assemblée qui avons été opposés à ce projet dès le début, les néo-démocrates, qu'on veut vraiment remercier la population locale et la population de Toronto qui ont travaillé si fort, d'une manière acharnée, pour une période d'au moins 15 ans pour arrêter ce projet.

Je veux mettre un contexte un peu historique sur ce point, la perspective historique de combien de temps ce projet est en place. Moi, monsieur le Président, comme vous le savez—je pense que vous avez été élu au même temps que moi, en 1990. Je me rappelle un des premiers dossiers; c'était en 1990, si je me rappelle bien. Oui. En 1990, quand j'ai été élu, je me rappelle un des premiers meetings que j'ai eus. C'était M. McGuinty—pas le premier ministre mais l'autre M. McGuinty, la personne qui voulait commencer ce projet—qui nous avait « lobbies » pour nous dire, un, que la ville de Toronto avait signé une entente avec M. McGuinty et autres pour commencer le processus de développer le dépotoir à Kirkland Lake, et que le gouvernement de M. Peterson était en faveur de ce projet. Je me rappelle très clairement. Cela a été dit non seulement par M. McGuinty, mais aussi par M^{me} Swift, je pense, qui

travaillait à la ville de Toronto. C'était très clair que le gouvernement provincial de la journée, les libéraux sous M. Peterson, était totalement d'accord avec ce projet.

1720

Nous, les néo-démocrates, au gouvernement avec Bob Rae comme premier ministre, avons décidé, avec la ministre de l'Environnement, M^{me} Ruth Grier, de mettre en place un projet de loi qui a aboli la possibilité d'établir un dépotoir à Kirkland Lake. Nous avons amené cette législation ici à l'assemblée, et quand le temps est venu de voter pour ce projet de loi, les conservateurs et, oui, les libéraux ont voté contre nous. Ils ont voté pour avoir un dépotoir à Kirkland Lake.

Je me rappelle que M. Ramsay était en faveur d'avoir le dépotoir à Kirkland Lake à ce point-là. Le projet de loi était établi, je pense, en 1992, et essentiellement ce qui est arrivé est qu'en 1995 M. Ramsay avait changé sa position. Pourquoi? Il a bien lu l'électorat du comté de Timiskaming-Cochrane dans le temps. La majorité du monde était opposée à ce projet, et comme un bon politicien, il a décidé de renverser sa position et de prendre la position opposée à son parti.

Les conservateurs sont venus au pouvoir, ont introduit un projet de loi, qui a aboli le projet de loi NPD et a alloué la possibilité de développer ce projet à Kirkland Lake comme un dépotoir.

Cela a pris huit ans, une organisation énorme et des travaux de la part des citoyens et citoyennes de la région de Toronto pour finalement, à plusieurs reprises, repousser ce projet.

Je me souviens d'être venu à Toronto pour assister aux audiences qui ont eu lieu quand le maire Mel Lastman et son conseil voulaient accepter ce projet. Justement, il y a certains membres de l'assemblée qui sont ici aujourd'hui qui s'intéressaient à voir ce projet de loi.

Ça a pris des néo-démocrates comme Michael Prue, qui était au conseil dans le temps, et d'autres néo-démocrates à l'assemblée et une couple de conservateurs aussi, pour repousser cette entente. Finalement, c'était démontré que c'était une solution trop dispendieuse pour la ville de Toronto et ils ont rejeté l'utilisation de Kirkland Lake comme projet de dépotoir.

Cela a pris beaucoup d'autres forces après. Je me rappelle bien être à Kirkland Lake, je pense que c'était à l'automne—je ne me rappelle pas quelle année—où les citoyens et les citoyennes se sont organisés et ont bloqué le chemin de fer de North Bay à Kirkland Lake comme une manière de protester contre ce que ce gouvernement faisait.

Je veux dire très clairement que cela a pris une force énorme pour arrêter ce projet, et je suis fier d'être ici aujourd'hui, comme je l'étais en 1992, pour voter une deuxième fois à cette assemblée pour empêcher un projet comme la mine Adams d'être développé comme dépotoir pour la province de l'Ontario.

It's almost like what goes around, comes around. We find ourselves some 15 years later, going back and doing what we did about 15 years ago. I was elected in 1990 and the issue was opening the Adams mine. We

introduced legislation, as an NDP government at that time, to ban it, and at that point the Liberals and Conservatives voted in opposition to the government and supported not having a ban. We thought it was the right thing then. New Democrats think it's the right thing now. We voted and created the legislation in 1992 to cancel the Adams mine project and make it not be a possibility. We've always maintained that position.

There have been many hours, I would say years, of work on the part of many volunteers from Kirkland Lake, Earleton, New Liskeard, Timmins, Toronto—you name it—to stop this project. I want to take the opportunity to say to those people that if it hadn't been for the grass-roots organization, if it hadn't been for people like Terry Graves, Charlie Angus, Pierre Bélanger and many others, it would have been pretty darn impossible to be here today. If this is a victory, I think it's a victory because the people not only of Toronto but, more importantly, the people of northern Ontario organized in opposition to this particular project.

This particular project also allows us to talk about something that is somewhat related: economic development. We need to remember that the town of Kirkland Lake wanted this project because that community has undergone massive change to the local economy.

There used to be a time when Kirkland Lake was almost like the streets were paved with gold. You had mines that were in operation—Kerr Addison, the Adams mine and many others—that contributed to the local economy of Kirkland Lake. Unfortunately, mining being a cyclical industry, basically all the mines have closed since the inception of Kirkland Lake back in the early 1900s.

When the town of Kirkland Lake was saying yes to this project, they were so desperate for any kind of economic development that they were prepared to say, "Yes, we'll take garbage in the town of Kirkland Lake." I think it was a cry for help that went unheard.

The Tory government took office in 1995, and yet this government is having to prove to me, including the federal government—we're not getting involved in local/regional economic development in the way we should be in order to assist towns like Kirkland Lake. It is really important that we double our efforts to look at what we can do concretely at the federal, provincial and local levels to work together with local individuals and entrepreneurs to figure out how to make the economy in Kirkland Lake and other places work.

There are a number of things we can do. One of the things I've advocated for, ever since the Tories in 1995 changed it, is that the northern heritage fund should not be used as a fund for capital dollars. Capital dollars for hospitals, schools, roads etc, should come out of the line ministries. I disagree that the heritage fund dollars should be used for capital projects.

The now \$160 million that we get annually in the heritage fund would go an extremely long way in assisting businesses to stay in business or get off the ground. We don't have to give those businesses grants. I've never

argued that in my whole time in politics. But we know it is difficult for a business to borrow money in northern Ontario. The banks just don't want to do business there to the degree they used to, even 15 years ago.

So we should use the heritage fund as a loan guarantee mechanism. Let's use the lion's share of that money to say that if Mr or Mrs X has a project that meets good, rational thought when it comes to a project that can be profitable for them and create jobs for northern Ontario, "OK, we're prepared to guarantee that loan," recognizing that some of them are going to go bad and we're going to have to use some of the heritage fund money to pay off loans that went under.

The reality is that if we don't take that chance in putting our confidence, by way of putting our money where our mouth is, to support businesses, the northern economy will continue to dwindle. We've had almost a 10% reduction in our population in some of the communities across northern Ontario since the last census.

I think the reasons for that are very clear. You've got the Paul Martin Liberals who have decided that they're out of economic development in regional places like northern Ontario. You had the Tory government that did the same thing. If I disagree with both Liberals and Tories on that point, it is that government does have a role to play.

Should we be investing capital dollars? The answer is yes, but capital dollars should come from line ministries. Do we have to have a good highway system? Of course we do. We need to have money in our Ministry of Transportation to make sure that our highway system works, not only for individuals running up and down the road, but for the transportation of goods up and down the highway into and out of northern Ontario.

Should we investing in the Ontario Northland Railway system? Obviously yes, but that shouldn't come from the heritage fund. That should come from an allocation of the treasury to the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines to say, "We're prepared to invest in the future of northern Ontario."

How much money did we give GO Transit? I think it was about a year ago that we gave over \$100 million to GO Transit, rightfully so, to upgrade their stock, to be able to move people from their houses and commute into Toronto and back again. That's a good investment. That's how an economy works. Are we saying that we're not prepared to invest \$10 million, \$20 million or \$30 million in the Ontario Northland to help develop it as a vital link to northern Ontario and for economic development? It doesn't make any sense.

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: Listen, I have checked the budget. The problem I have is that we don't have a buy-in when it comes to the economy of northern Ontario. Should we have good telecommunication systems? Of course. How do we provide that? I think it's a partnership in that case between the private sector and government. Where the private sector is unable to provide really good high-tech internet and telecommunication infrastructure, because

the population base doesn't exist, the province and the feds have to come to the table.

For example, can a business make money setting up internet systems in a town like Attawapiskat? Probably not. Then maybe government's got to do it. Why should the citizens of Attawapiskat not have an ability to communicate with the rest of the world by virtue of being a small isolated community off of the main hub? We have to find ways of bringing them into the hub.

I argue there are a couple of things we've got to do. If people wanted garbage in Kirkland Lake as a project and voted yes in a referendum, I always understood that to mean they are frustrated with the downward spiral of their local economy and are prepared to do anything, including accepting Toronto's garbage, to create economic activity and prosperity in their community. So I say we have failed as an Ontario Legislature. The federal government has failed as a federal House of Commons to respond to the needs of places like northern Ontario, to say, "Listen. I don't buy into pure market economics as far as saying, 'If it ain't going to stand on its own, don't do anything.'" I think, in places like northern Ontario, that's a disaster. So I say, let's understand what happened in Kirkland Lake and let's take that, quite frankly, as a call for help.

1730

We as legislators have a responsibility for all regions of the province. If the north needs to have some special attention now and into the future in order to be able to develop its local economy, so be it. We spend hundreds of millions of dollars on the 400-series highways in order to support Ford, GM, Chrysler, Toyota, Honda and everybody else in moving their goods east and west along the highway system. We think nothing of that. We say, "That's good for business." Well, of course it's great for business. We spend hundreds of millions of dollars on Toronto transit. We spend hundreds of millions of dollars on GO Transit. We think nothing of that because we see that as a good investment for southern Ontario. I'm saying that we have to have those kinds of investments in the north.

I see my good friend Mr Bartolucci is here. I give him some credit. Mr Bartolucci, I think, is actually attempting to do what I think is right. I only hope, at the end of the day, he's got the clout that he needs—and he certainly can count on my support, because I'll give it to him—to make those kinds of things happen. Mr Bartolucci, the heritage fund should not be about capital. We should have line ministries do capital. If we need better highways, MTO should pay for that. If we've got \$160 million in today's heritage fund, let's use it for economic development. You come from northern Ontario, as I do. You understand the northern economy needs some help. I'm saying across the floor to you today, I'm prepared to do whatever needs to happen in order to support some kind of initiative that, at the end of the day, is going to say that the north is going to get some kind of attention, so that towns like Kirkland Lake don't have to say, "Yes, I'm prepared to take garbage as a mechanism to create a

few jobs in my community." That was a cry for help. Let's not let the cry of the rest of northern Ontario fall on deaf ears.

Mr Speaker, I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to have this debate. I look forward to the vote that's going to be happening probably tomorrow as a deferred vote, and look forward to yet again voting yes to saying no to garbage in northern Ontario.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Arthurs: A little earlier I had a chance to talk briefly, for a couple of minutes. I think I finished by talking about the garbage bags that left the shore and headed into the lake and made a splash.

Yesterday, the member from Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant, as he was speaking about some things happening in Michigan, also made some references to Mr Anderson. I presume he was talking at that point, given the context—because he also talked about Joyce Savoline—about the regional chairman for the regional municipality of Durham. I think he implied somehow that the regional chairman was in favour of the position being taken by the opposition that the Adams mine would be a great spot for garbage. Now, I know the regional chair for Durham has concerns, as we all do, about how we're going to manage our garbage, and has taken a strong leadership role within that municipality in looking at alternative ways of dealing with waste. But I can tell you that the regional municipality of Durham is on record as opposing the Adams mine facility, the Adams mine lake, the Adams mine as a spot to put Durham's garbage or Toronto's garbage. So any implication that the regional chair would support that would be false, given the position of that regional council.

I want to take you back for a minute, if I could, to some of the things we need to do to deal with our waste. I was mentioning that this week I had the opportunity for the first time to take my small, green, 20-litre bin and put

in the wet waste and get it out to the edge of the driveway along with my blue boxes and the brown bag with my yard waste in it. As a result—

Mr Baird: Who wrote this speech?

Mr Arthurs: This is reality. This is a reality show. To the member across, this really happens. In our community, people can take their wet waste out separately, take their recycling out separately, take their yard waste out separately. The impact is that there's very little left at the end of that driveway in real waste.

The Acting Speaker: Further questions and comments? OK, the member for Timmins-James Bay has two minutes to reply.

Mr Bisson: Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mrs Dombrowsky has moved third reading of Bill 49. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

I have received from the deputy government whip a notice of deferral. This vote will take place tomorrow at the appropriate time when we have deferred votes.

Hon Rick Bartolucci (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): Mr Speaker, I move adjournment of the House until 6:45 of the clock this evening.

The Acting Speaker: Mr Bartolucci has moved adjournment of the House. Is it pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

This House stands adjourned until a quarter to 7 this evening.

The House adjourned at 1736.

CONTENTS

Wednesday 16 June 2004

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Jassen Cullimore	
Mr Barrett	2939
David Cook and Terry Butt	
Mr Peterson.....	2939
Relay for Life	
Mr Miller	2939
Jack McClelland	
Ms Smith.....	2940
Health services	
Mr Runciman	2940
Headway Homes (Niagara) Inc	
Mr Kormos	2940
Education	
Ms Broten	2940
Federal election	
Ms Wynne.....	2941
Member's comments	
Mr Wilkinson.....	2941

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

Standing committee on government agencies	
The Deputy Speaker	2941
Report deemed adopted	2941
Standing committee on estimates	
Mr Jackson.....	2941
Report deemed received.....	2941
Standing committee on regulations and private bills	
Mr Wong.....	2942
Report adopted.....	2942

FIRST READINGS

Asian Longhorn Beetle Confinement Act, 2004,	
Bill 102, <i>Mr Tascona</i>	
Agreed to	2942
Mr Tascona.....	2942

MOTIONS

Private members' public business	
Mr Duncan.....	2942
Agreed to	2942
House sittings	
Mr Duncan	2942
Agreed to	2942

ORAL QUESTIONS

Health care funding	
Mrs Witmer.....	2943
Mr Smitherman.....	2943, 2945, 2946
Mr Hampton	2945, 2946

Cancer treatment

Mr Jackson	2944
Mr Smitherman	2944

Minister's comments

Mr Dunlop.....	2947
Mr Bryant.....	2947

Hydro rates

Mr Hampton	2947
Mr Duncan	2947

Municipalities

Mr Brownell.....	2948
Mr Caplan	2948

Hospital funding

Mr O'Toole	2948
Mr Smitherman	2948

Doctors' services

Mr Bisson.....	2949
Mr Smitherman	2949

Children's services

Mr Milloy	2949
Mrs Bountrogianni	2950

Northern Ontario

Mr Miller.....	2950
Mr Sorbara	2950

Immigrants' skills

Mr Prue	2951
Mrs Chambers	2951
Ms Churley.....	2951

SARS

Mrs Sandals.....	2951
Mr Smitherman	2951

Agriculture industry

Mr Hardeman	2952
Mr Peters	2952

PETITIONS

Motorcycle insurance

Mr Jackson	2952
------------------	------

Chiropractic services

Mr Kormos	2952
Ms Churley.....	2953
Mr Dunlop.....	2953, 2955
Mr Wilson	2954

Long-term care

Mr Craiton	2953
------------------	------

Health care

Mr Runciman	2953
Mr Miller.....	2955

Taxation

Mr Runciman	2953
Mr Martiniuk.....	2955

Un Ontario sans fumée

Mr McNeely	2953
------------------	------

Ajax-Pickering hospital

Mr Ruprecht	2954
-------------------	------

District of Muskoka

Mr Miller	2954
-----------------	------

Property taxation

Mr Ruprecht.....	2955
------------------	------

LCBO outlet

Mr Wilson.....	2955
----------------	------

THIRD READINGS

Adams Mine Lake Act, 2004, Bill 49,

<i>Mrs Dombrowsky</i>	
Ms Churley	2956, 2957, 2966
Ms Di Cocco	2956
Mr Miller	2956
Mr Arthurs	2956, 2971, 2975
Mr Dunlop	2957
Mr Ramsay	2963
Mr Leal	2964, 2967
Mr Hardeman.....	2966
Ms Smith.....	2966
Mr Martiniuk	2967
Mr Yakabuski	2967, 2971
Mr Bisson	2970, 2971, 2975
Mr Wilkinson.....	2970
Mr Baird	2970
Debate deemed adjourned.....	2975

OTHER BUSINESS

Visitors

Mr Kormos	2943
-----------------	------

TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Mercredi 16 juin 2004

PREMIÈRE LECTURE

Loi de 2004 sur la limitation de la propagation du capricorne d'Asie,	
projet de loi 102, <i>M. Tascona</i>	
Adoptée	2942

PÉTITIONS

Un Ontario sans fumée

M. McNeely.....	2953
-----------------	------

TROISIÈME LECTURE

Loi de 2004 sur le lac de la mine

Adams, projet de loi 49,	
<i>M^{me} Dombrowsky</i>	
M. Bisson.....	2970, 2971, 2975
Débat présumé ajourné	2975



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First Session, 38th Parliament

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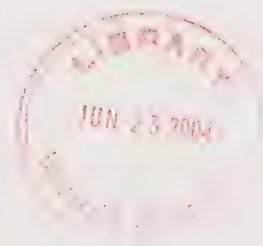
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(Hansard)**

**Journal
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Wednesday 16 June 2004

Mercredi 16 juin 2004



Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 16 June 2004

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 16 juin 2004

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING PROGRAM CANCELLATION ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 ANNULANT LE PROGRAMME DE PERFECTIONNEMENT PROFESSIONNEL

Mr Kennedy moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 82, An Act to amend the Ontario College of Teachers Act, 1996 to cancel the Professional Learning Program / Projet de loi 82, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1996 sur l'Ordre des enseignantes et des enseignants de l'Ontario en vue d'annuler le programme de perfectionnement professionnel.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Ted Arnott): I recognize the Minister of Education for the leadoff speech.

Hon Gerard Kennedy (Minister of Education): At the outset, I'd like to acknowledge that I'll be sharing my time with the member from Mississauga West, Bob Delaney, and the members for Scarborough Southwest, Sault Ste Marie and Guelph-Wellington.

The bill we bring forward today is a punctuation in the development of a real teacher development program in this province. The punctuation we have is a stop to a program that hasn't worked. It was brought forward in the wrong spirit and in the wrong expression by the previous government in the name of teacher development, but it was really not only not accomplishing any of the objectives it set out, but having quite the opposite effect. We have a bill that purported to be about teaching standards that actually had the effect of lowering the morale and, ultimately, the standards of teaching in this province.

The job that we have in this Legislature is obviously to provide good government, to provide responsible leadership in our roles as elected officials. Certainly part of that is a responsibility toward the people who are engaged by the government on behalf of the people. Of the various groups of people we have working for us, not many are as large or as significant as the teaching workforce of this province, some 115,000 strong, in publicly funded schools in this province.

The bill we have in front of us today, Bill 82, up for second reading, simply puts forward a better prospect to

those 115,000 public service employees, those public service professionals. It essentially holds out to them and to the parents and the other interested members of the public of which there are many in this province, and to the future of education, that we will actually find a means by which we tap into the potential of our students, primarily by tapping into the potential that we have in the people who instruct at the front of the class.

It is a difficult job. I suppose it would be nice on some level if all one had to do was stand in this House, pass a law and say that made teachers, teaching and learning automatic, that somehow there were, as this bill started off being called, a test or an indication that would give us that assurance. The reality is different. The reality of our province since the passage of the professional learning program is that we've lost time. We've lost time to do the roll-up-the-sleeves work that is really required in our schools to motivate people.

The reason we take the unusual step of wiping out an entire initiative is because, notwithstanding the very large gap between the approach of the last government and the approach this government brings to bear and the dichotomy, really, between the things we're trying to do, you'll find that there are very few things we have gotten rid of holus-bolus, simply because we have a regard for the need for stability in the system, the need for predictability, not only on the part of students but also all the people who are working to support students. That has to be provided. But this is gone in its entirety should the Legislature express its will in support of this bill.

1850

The reason for that is its premise. Its premise was not only what I would call a lazy approach, one that didn't fulfill the obligation of government to find a real answer, to motivate people, but it had at its root the idea that there had to be a compulsion or a force in order to have professionalism on the part of teachers. That is a false premise, and it's a premise that came on top of an overall officially sanctioned taxpayer-paid-for outlook on the part of the government that extended even to television advertising against the professionalism and, ultimately, the integrity of the people in our classrooms who, I would argue here tonight, as our party and our Premier have consistently done, have fundamental integrity and express it on an ongoing basis.

I would say even to the members opposite who may have supported this bill in its initial expression that if they would be in any way honest and reasonable—and I'm saying they are honest and reasonable people, but on

this particular subject, I think they found themselves in a funny place. To say otherwise, to say that we need to legislate a certain amount of professionalism to a group of people who are asking every day to manifest themselves as professionals—they make choices over other people's children, and we in this Legislature make that possible. More than that, we make it necessary. It's the law to send your kids to school. It's your law to be in the charge of these particular people, and we have increasingly learned what a public duty and responsibility that is to have discharged.

We have, over time—all governments of all stripes—supported an increased professionalism on the part of teachers. As we ran into struggles in recent years, these are struggles not necessarily of the making—if you look at the curve of professionalism of teachers, it has actually been fairly steep. It's been the steeper curve that we've had around expectations for our kids and hoping that someone else is going to help us get it there. But we have to be honest about what those challenges really are. Those challenges are not about forcing professionals to do something or to be something. In fact, if there's one clarifying difference between the motivation of this bill and what it seeks to replace, it's that we also want teacher excellence in this province, and we assume that teachers want it as well. So we don't need a bill to force artificial qualifications.

Let me just lay out for the people out there what this bill is going to do. It's going to get rid of artificial qualifications in favour of an environment that will actually get us teacher excellence. One of the ways it will do that is to simply not require an artificial standard: 14 courses completed within five years or, according to a law passed by this Legislature, you're no longer a teacher. Now, no number of courses is going to guarantee that we have good teachers, just like no number of courses would assure us in this House that we have good legislators. There are other standards which have to be met. We wouldn't want to wait five years, frankly, to find out if we had teachers with problems or issues or difficulties. We instead believe fundamentally that we have a very highly qualified workforce.

I would just point out to people in this House who aren't aware that we turn away the vast majority of teacher candidates in this province from our education faculties. We have had, in recent years, ratios of 7 to 1 and 8 to 1, in parallel with facilities like law and medicine, of qualified people trying to get into teaching. We need to nurture the preparation time that we have. We need to find ways to find its expression in the everyday lives of teaching and not, as people who remember the antecedents of what we're here to remedy today, have something scratched on the back of an envelope. That was a 1999 campaign promise by the then-governing Conservatives that said, "We're going to test teachers." They spent public money on backdrops that said "testing teachers." Then a leaked cabinet document shortly after the election said that, in fact, there is no teacher test that can be applied gainfully. Instead, it

became this mandatory professional development that wasn't based on sound principles. It is a good thing for professionals to develop; of that, there can be no denial. But what is not sound is to have that happen in a prescriptive way, to have that decided by a central body, to have that organized by the government of the day.

The irony of this is that there was a college of teachers formed on a consensus basis arriving from a royal commission in 1994. Every party said that a college of teachers would be a good idea, but when it came time to extend what should have been respect to teachers consistent with having a college, consistent with being a profession that deserved the privilege of regulating itself, the previous government overruled that college of teachers: "No, we will impose on that college our will, not necessarily how it is seen by people whom we've selected to uphold the public interest in teaching, but our will," and ultimately, I would submit to this House, a political will and flawed for that reason.

What we did not have were steps forward. What the children, students and young adults of this province have had as a result is something of a step backward. Professional development, investment in human capital, is the way to go forward in education. These are the things that work. We used to know that in this province when we were a ranking jurisdiction in terms of educational achievement, but now we've slipped backward, in no small part related to the fact that we have not been taking the steps to motivate and support our teachers. We've been putting them in too crowded classrooms with too few resources, with outdated textbooks and without the kinds of conditions that actually allow them to access one of the best ways to achieve things on behalf of an increasingly complex classroom.

Part of the challenge that we, this government, have to step up to bat on has to do with that challenge, has to do with not trying to wash our hands of it with the passage of an inappropriate law, but rather taking responsibility for it in tandem with teachers in this province and saying to teachers, "We understand what that classroom is like." I think the teachers of this province, for a variety of reasons, have had good, sound reasons to believe that they work on the moon, that they're in some different place than the rest of us when it comes to what the current educational challenges are.

We're going to close that gap by recognizing that our number one asset in this province, in terms of what we went to achieve in education, is a highly skilled and motivated workforce. I would recommend to people watching this debate on Bill 82 to have a lookout for early next week, when we'll have a teacher development paper available for discussion. Rather than imposing something unilaterally, we're going to be working with not just the teachers of this province but with the administrators of school boards, with parents, with students—who, after all, are ultimately the net beneficiaries, or not, of any decisions that we make here—to come up with a real regime for teacher excellence.

What I would say that people will find in that paper is, at its core, a consistent outlook that this government has taken in its audition for government and will maintain throughout its administration, which is a policy of teacher respect. We believe that nothing else can work. If we can't treat teachers like professionals on a consistent basis, we have no right to expect back from them the kind of extraordinary effort that we require on behalf of our children.

We say that the highly qualified teachers whom we have need to have specific supports in order to continue to succeed. We are meeting this weekend with a group that we call the education partnership. In this new government, we have the idea that we need to be working together, so we've created our own means to do that: a table that, yes, has teachers at the table. Before we bring policies forward to this House, teachers, principals, students, parents, board trustees and other elements are sitting down to try and improve the policies we have before we impose them on two million kids, which ultimately is what happens if that isn't done.

We spend far too much of our day in the Ministry of Education fixing things that didn't need to be broken. This is one of those. We could have, even under the most adverse conditions, such as the professions who teach in this province had in the last eight years—we still could have found a way to get professional development to happen. I would submit to people out there that the evidence for that is that, time and time again, despite what the past government did toward teachers or toward education, people within those various bodies—elementary and secondary, French and Roman Catholic—all tried to co-operate, all tried to find solutions, but there simply wasn't an ability to do that.

1900

There is now. There is now an ability and a capacity to pull the best out of this province. I can tell you, as someone who, on behalf of this House, has the privilege of going around to our schools, we have in this province the people and the ideas to have the best education system in the world. Part of what we need to do and wasn't done in the legislation that we're pulling away from in Bill 82 was a simple recognition not just of that, but of what the task at hand is. To be able to allow people to access some of those tremendous ideas and programs and experiences is really fundamental to what we have to accomplish in this province.

We have in Ottawa, for example, where I was yesterday, a tremendous program that the principal tells me is already increasing literacy scores for students. They were just waiting for a chance to do that, and with the funding we provided last December, they bought the materials, they provided the training for the teachers that they'd been clamouring for, and they got a 20% spike in the literacy and numeracy attainment of those young kids. I would say that there is a direct correlation here.

This bill has a complicated title about the college of teachers and the professional learning program, but it's really about teaching and about students learning. It is

about the beginning, the first instalment, of our policy of teacher respect. We will see in this jurisdiction something different from elsewhere. In New York state, they had an initiative three years ago about teacher quality, and that was to find out which teachers had qualifications. We have a tradition in this province of highly qualified people that we can build on.

The kind of things that we can start to do is get after some of our own admitted weaknesses. We lose one in three new teachers. We pay \$7,000 or more a year to the faculty of education to train teachers, and then we have had an environment here where we're losing one in three. It's not a selection process. We're not losing the ones who can't teach. We're losing them simply because we have not created that reinforcement. After the teaching year that people have, and preparing and pre-service, we haven't been able to take them from universities into environments and make sure that they learn those other things that they have to have, because our school system has simply been too strained for that.

Yet elsewhere, mentoring programs are working. Taking experienced teachers, making them available to new teachers, having real time and resources there so that they can drill down on what they're capable of doing, only makes sense, and it's being done now only on a haphazard basis, because those are the resources that have been offered. So we're going to be able to create, through a mentoring program, a very strong sense that we value the teachers who are coming in. We'll also be able to work with our faculties of education to make sure that the kinds of things that teachers get prepared for are the things that we need to have happen in this province, that we'll be able to look at the formal and the informal opportunities that people need to have, both in school and on their own. There's a tremendous amount of work that needs to be recognized that takes place on the part of teachers to develop curriculum, to develop their own abilities, and right now there is no formal recognition—not in the tax structure; not in the way that we look at how we pay teachers. All we're saying is that we're going to take responsibility for any changes that there are in the system.

We have ambitions on behalf of students. We want every 12-year-old in this province to be able to read, write and comprehend at a high level—literacy and numeracy that has, for a variety of reasons, been denied too many of our young children in this province. We encounter them today in grade 10, and then struggling again in grade 11 and 12, 48,000 of whom may not get their diplomas this year. That's not acceptable. Our ambition is that we would solve the essence of that problem, the dilemma for those students, by the time of age 12.

You know what? I can say that as many times as I want in this House, and unless that's picked up by not the co-operation, not the willingness of teachers in this province, but by the commitment of teachers in this province, that won't happen. The only way that members of this House can ask for that commitment is to provide some of the support and some of the resources that people need,

because it is a tough job. We don't have in our schools the same kind of challenges that we once did. We have children who have language barriers. We are proudly, I believe, in this society, offering educational opportunities to children who used to be kept at home or parked in institutions.

All that means is, we need to be able to provide the resources to meet some of those challenges, because our ambitions are for every student. We share what I think instinctively teachers share: the idea that every student can learn. Our education system has to offer them the basic ingredients of citizenship, but there has to be the preparation and support for people to be able to do that.

We're looking at the role professional activity days can play in the course of the school year. We're also looking at a way, whether it's through tax credits or other elements, whether it's in curriculum involvement, we can acknowledge what teachers are doing on their own and on their own time.

We'll look also—and we have a separate discussion paper out there about what the college of teachers needs to be doing in respect of professional standards. But, as a corollary of what we're talking about here today, we'll say this: You can't have a college of teachers unless it's run by teachers; that in fact there has to be the basic extension of identity. If it's going to be self-regulation, it needs to be by the people who are being regulated.

We say also that there are opportunities for us, with respect to the evaluation that currently goes on, to tie that more into professional development. Ultimately, we all succeed when our teachers feel they have the support they require. The only way that can be provided is if it's done on a consistent basis.

We spend, lamentably, in this province, or we did until this year, something in the order of less than one eighth of one hundredth of 1% on developing our staff. In industry, that would put you out of business. We have depended instead on teachers pulling money out of their own pockets to do additional qualification courses, sometimes at \$1,000 a pop. Instead, in this province we need to take responsibility, not for the sake of teachers but for the sake of students, for making sure that teachers can keep up with changing programs and certainly with the changes that we have.

We bring this ambition that our education system will be among the best anywhere in the world in preparing students. The only way to make that happen is to have discrete policies for new teachers and experienced teachers so they can interact with other industries and other experiences and that we do the preparation, yes, but not the preparation or the development of teachers that is based on a flawed idea.

All I'm asking this House to do with this bill is to remove that flawed idea, to open up other possibilities and create, for the first time in too long a time in this province, a partnership between teachers and other people who are joined together in their ambition for the children of this province and for what publicly funded

education can finally do on behalf of the future of this province.

Mr Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): It is with the enthusiastic support of many close friends, not only in Mississauga West but in the education community in Peel, that I speak in favour of the legislation to repeal the professional learning program for teachers in this province. I acknowledge especially the friendship and help of Steve and Shelley Katz, Clinton and Micheline Smith and Rob and Sue Harshman. This expensive program has been ineffective in achieving any of its goals. The PLP was mean-spirited and it has failed to win the support of the average Ontario teacher.

Some people ask, "What's PLP?" I think it's a fair question. I ask them to imagine that in order to continue in their job or profession, they are required to remain on perpetual probation. That's what PLP was.

PLP was, first and foremost, a bureaucratic, inefficient and cumbersome system that involved unnecessary paperwork and took valuable time away from students in the classroom. The record-keeping required was onerous. PLP generated little but ill will among the teachers who were supposed to be its beneficiaries.

PLP was poorly conceived. For all the mountains of paper it generated, PLP did little to benefit teachers. Many teachers tell me it actually damaged the average classroom in this province. The high levels of uncertainty generated within the teaching community, as well as the time the program robbed from class preparation, only hurt the quality of the teaching time our students received.

The PLP excluded teacher input. It forced a one-size-fits-all system on all teachers in Ontario. The previous government felt that it knew what was best for teachers and our education system. It introduced the PLP without consultation and without regard for the real needs of teachers. Would it not seem logical to involve teachers in the process of development of their own professional development program?

Who is better qualified to understand what teachers need in order to grow and develop than teachers themselves? Rather than take a dictatorial approach that imposes an unreasonable and unworkable program on the teaching profession, it would seem logical to work co-operatively with our teachers to come up with a program that not only meets their needs but is effective.

What this government is determined to do is involve our teachers in designing the most effective way to learn to do their jobs better.

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All Ontarians would agree that the education of our children is a top priority. It is the teachers in our system who are the key to our education system: teachers who are well-trained and highly motivated. Good teachers are essential to the success of our education system. With the rapid changes taking place in our society and in our economy, it is more critical than ever for teachers to stay up-to-date on new trends and new ideas.

As a manager in the private sector, I was responsible for the professional development of my staff. Not surprisingly, it was more effective to help a staff member progress in his or her career with a helpful suggestion on professional development, rather than threaten the same staff member with penalties for not doing professional development.

The implication with PLP, of course, was that teachers wouldn't do anything without the government having to beat them with a stick. It just isn't so. Most teachers already take courses to develop professionally. Summers often mean new courses, upgrading qualifications and putting in long hours writing papers for university courses. This is one of the reasons why Ontario teachers rank among the best-qualified teachers in the world. This is one of the reasons why the best teaching in Ontario happens in public schools.

Teachers in this province have proven over and over again that they want to grow and develop as teachers. We need to help this growth happen, rather than continuously confronting them and making their jobs more difficult.

If we decide, as a government, to work with our teachers, then we'll see much more professional training take place. Our Ontario classrooms will be the better for it.

It's not only what you ask people to do, but how you ask them to do it that is important. This government is committed to changing the tone of its discussions with teachers in this area of ongoing training. The results will speak for themselves.

Another problem with the PLP is its exorbitant cost—close to \$10 million. The cost has been expensed to the Ontario College of Teachers, which is in turn supported by teachers through their annual dues. So here we have a situation where the teachers themselves are forced to pay for a costly, ineffective program that they know does not work and into which they've had no input whatsoever. Is there any doubt that teachers would have no faith in a system like this?

This government is finding it is more successful and productive to work with teachers rather than confront them. We are interested in listening to our teachers rather than turning a deaf ear to them. It's in this vein that we've decided to explore with our teachers the most effective ways to develop excellence in education.

One effective way to facilitate the professional growth of teachers is the development of a mentor system, where more experienced teachers partner with those who are just entering the system. Mentoring not only works better, it addresses the individual needs that new teachers have. In those schools where mentoring has been introduced, it has proven effective in building teams of dedicated teachers who are able to work together, share ideas and see student achievement improve dramatically.

At T.L. Kennedy Secondary School in Mississauga, for example, mentoring has resulted in a significant improvement in staff performance as well as staff morale and the desire among staff to work together toward common goals. This program alone has achieved far

more than the \$10 million spent by the PLP in its sad, sorry three-year existence.

Across Ontario, schools have introduced many innovative methods that are far more effective in bringing about results. Many schools have developed their own models, which combine dramatic improvement in student achievement, community involvement and professional development for teachers.

Striving toward excellence in education must include dialogue with all of those involved in the educational process. It's fundamentally unsound to expect that we will achieve excellence in education through the imposition of one monolithic program such as the PLP.

Ontario teachers have shown their willingness to experiment for excellence in the past. They will continue to do so under the right policies and the right leadership. Schools and individual educators will be encouraged to take some risks to see improvement in student achievement by trying new techniques and working collaboratively with others. Our goal is to encourage innovation among teachers rather than to stifle their imagination.

We are proposing, as a government, that we begin to put money into professional development for teachers. Under the PLP system, teachers were responsible for paying for most of their courses themselves, including travel and accommodation expenses, wherever that may have been necessary.

It would seem reasonable for the government to make an investment in the training of the people who are responsible for the education of our younger generation. By doing this, we'll be sending a message to both teachers and the community that we really are concerned about what goes on in the classroom. One of the ways by which this government intends to invest in teacher professional development is through the expansion of summer courses, as well as other vehicles that will improve the quality of education in the classroom. Practical courses that are geared to the classroom will directly benefit students. In addition, teachers will gain from the interaction with other educators who have done research or have experience in the fields where they both work.

The government that Ontarians rejected last fall had plenty of simple answers, such as PLP, for a world with a desperate shortage of simple problems. It would be misleading to say that teacher training is a simple problem. Ontario's education community consists of assets who draw a salary and who go home to their families after school is out. For this reason, the Ministry of Education is launching a series of consultations with educators, school boards, principals and faculties of education. We want the best return that we can get from Ontario's investment in its human assets in our education system.

The end of PLP signals a new era of co-operation with the educators in this province, and it opens the door for innovation as well as improved student performance. PLP was badly conceived from its very inception. As bad policy, no patching, no fixing and no modification can ever make it work. It needs to be scrapped, and this bill

will scrap it. For these reasons, I gladly support the elimination of the PLP program.

Mr Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): I just wanted to make a few remarks regarding Bill 82, which is only a few pages long. Leafing through it, it's about three page long, very brief, and it simply states, "An Act to amend the Ontario College of Teachers Act, 1996 to cancel the Professional Learning Program." It looks very benign and perhaps very harmless, but it is actually a very strong message. It's a message to the teaching profession and to teachers in Ontario that the war against them is finally over.

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): We're declaring peace.

Mr Berardinetti: As my colleague to my left has stated, in a way it's a declaration of peace. But I think it goes beyond that. It sends a signal to the teaching profession that we wish to work with them and to treat them with the respect they deserve.

I wanted to start off by congratulating the minister for bringing forward this bill. I had a lot of pressure from a lot of my friends whom I went to school with who became teachers and who found out, when I was seeking office last fall, that the Liberal Party platform would include a significant education component. They spoke to me, they lobbied me, and they said, "We, as teachers, are not being treated the way we should be treated."

When you look at other professionals, whether they be doctors, lawyers, chartered accountants, engineers or other professionals, they don't have to go through the same types of rigorous learning programs that were put forward by the former government. I was leafing through some parts of the previous program that was in existence, and basically what was in place was a requirement that teachers had to complete 14 courses every five years to maintain their Ontario teaching certificate. I find it somewhat onerous and somewhat unusual for one profession to have to do that, to take 14 courses every five years to maintain your certificate. I think if you're going to do something like this, which I don't support, then the same would apply to other professionals, as I mentioned, whether they be doctors, lawyers or other professionals.

1920

If you started doing this, the costs involved in this testing and certification program would be huge. So I really think that in some ways this is saving money for the taxpayers of Ontario, because I think teachers, like lawyers, like doctors and other professionals, are going to do what is necessary to maintain and keep their professional standards as high as possible. In any profession, you're going to get good and bad, whether they be lawyers or doctors. You're not going to get perfect in every profession. That could apply to politicians as well. It could apply to all sorts of professions and fields; you're going to get good, and you're going to get bad. But I really don't think in my heart that what the previous government was trying to do would in any way improve the quality of teaching in Ontario.

Let me speak for a few minutes about the teachers who are here in Ontario and who have worked so hard here in Ontario. I'm a product of the public school system. I attended public school in Scarborough from kindergarten right through to grade 8, and then I attended high school in Scarborough from grade 9 to grade 13. I have to say that, except for maybe one or two teachers, 99% of them were exceptional professionals. They worked hard at their job. They were willing to spend time after school with individual students, including myself if I needed extra assistance, and they got involved in the community or in the school community, whether it be running the football team or the chess club or the photography club or whatever other group that ran after hours.

Many teachers took the time to get involved, and I really have to take my hat off and give my congratulations and express my real admiration to many of these teachers who worked so hard. I've had the opportunity in the past few years to reconnect with some of them as I've gone back to my old high school and my old public school and had the chance to speak with some of these teachers.

Some of them recently retired. I had a chance to meet with one—his name is Mr Crowe—and he was my grade 12 and my grade 13 history teacher. He has recently retired. I have to say that he had a tremendous influence on my decision to go to university and what kinds of courses to take, what kinds of things to do and what direction to go in life. In many ways, he's an unsung hero, because he influenced many other people as well, not just myself, to be better people, to be contributing members of our society and to try to strive to be the best they could be.

I can think of many dozens of other teachers who did the same thing. They would put their whole heart into their job and into their profession to try to do the best they could. I take these few moments to thank them and to congratulate them for what they're doing. I feel that in a way today we are somewhat recognizing their professionalism and that we are saying to them, "You deserve better than to have to be tested, you deserve better than to be beaten up"—as the former government did—"and you deserve better than what happened in the past eight and a half years." I honestly feel that this short, three-page bill, Bill 82, is the start of a program to bring teachers back into the mainstream of our education system and back into the mainstream, ultimately, of Ontario society.

We recently tabled a budget on May 18, and the finance minister spoke about a four-year plan. That four-year plan looked at many aspects of Ontario. The education system was one of them; the health care system, of course, was a huge part of the budget; the environment, stronger cities, and other areas as well. But I have to say that I think one of the cornerstones of our four-year plan which was encapsulated in our budget was the education system and improving that system.

I think our Minister of Education, along with our Premier, and all members of the Liberal caucus are com-

mitted to seeing a better Ontario with better teachers, a better health care system, stronger cities, a cleaner and better and safer environment, and so on. It's all part of our four-year plan. It's all contained in our budget. I think today's debate, our start of our discussion on this particular piece of legislation, is significant, because it allows us to bring education into that four-year plan and to truly start to discuss it as something significant within Ontario.

In the final few moments I have, I wanted to just relate a small story. Last Friday, I had the opportunity to visit a school in my riding. I've visited many schools since I've been elected. This school is called St Agatha school and it's located in the riding of Scarborough Southwest. As I was given a tour through the school by the principal and a few of the teachers, I was shocked at the condition of the school. I was shocked at the infrastructure of the school. I was shocked at the morale of the teachers. There are 400 students in that school; 200 of them are in portables and 200 are in the school. The teachers were doing the best they could to try to teach their kids and get them the best possible education. I could see from going through that tour with the teachers that they were doing the very best they could, with the very limited resources they had, to make these kids the best students they could possibly be.

I left them saying that we had a plan in place and that we would be doing things to make schools like St Agatha a little bit better, whether it be improving the infrastructure or improving some of the morale of the teachers, which is at an all-time low right now. I think this bill, this particular piece of legislation, begins the morale part of that whole improvement, which is so important.

I'm happy to support it. I put my support fully behind the minister and I congratulate him and the Premier.

I pass on the remainder of my time to the other speakers from our caucus.

Mr David Orazietti (Sault Ste Marie): I'm pleased to rise this evening to add my comments with respect to Bill 82, the cancellation of the PLP program. I'd like to commend the minister for introducing this very progressive legislation that addresses an outstanding issue and really speaks to the treatment of teachers in this province over the past eight years by the past Conservative government. I think it really demonstrated to teachers how they were viewed in this province, and it was in a very negative light. We had a government that tried to convince parents in this province that your child's teacher was your enemy and that they were your friend.

This program was extremely divisive. It resulted in an entire morale and relationship with the provincial government, over 8 years, that was very negative and unproductive. It added much instability to the education system in this province. So I'm pleased to lend my support this evening to the repealing of the professional learning program with Bill 82.

What would have happened to education in this province had the Conservative government been re-elected? I hate to think, given the trends that were taking

place in education. Here's a little bit about the facts of our education system under the past Conservative government: \$500 million out of the public education system handed over to private schools; grade 3 standardized tests in reading have shown no improvement since 1999; math scores have dropped since 2000 to 57%; half a million students are in classes of 26 or more. We know the research indicates that class sizes of 20 are one of the most productive ways to maximize the learning potential of students in this province.

Under the Harris-Eves government, Ontarians' investment in education dropped us from 29th position to 46th position in North America. We lost 26% of teacher librarians, 22% of physical education teachers and 12% of English-as-a-second-language teachers. This is not the Liberal concept of managing and supporting our education system, when we need children in this province to be the best they can be to compete in an ever-changing economy.

They cut more than \$1 billion from education in their first two years: \$145 million from junior kindergarten, \$150 million from adult education, \$39 million from busing, \$163 million from classroom spending, and \$167 million from school construction and maintenance.

I can tell you that the Minister of Education visited the riding of Sault Ste Marie several weeks ago. We visited five schools in our community to meet with some of the local teachers, parents and students and to take a look at the learning environments which students in this province are faced with. The minister will certainly attest to this: We had classrooms with leaky roofs and tiles falling off the ceiling.

1930

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): Windows broken.

Mr Orazietti: Windows broken.

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): Rats running around.

Mr Orazietti: Definitely rats, mice, you name it. This is not the kind of environment we want our children in this province growing up in and expecting them to reach their potential. It's a testament to the incredible mismanagement of the education system. It reminds me of the balanced budget that the Conservatives had supposedly brought in. It's amazing. I know it's a fact. I worked in education for 10 years and I can tell you that it's the truth in education.

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): Well, then, you don't know what you're doing. I guess that's why you're here.

Mr Orazietti: That's OK. I think we've hit a nerve. I know the truth is painful for some people, but it still will be told here tonight.

Cuts to education investment forced 25 school boards to cancel junior kindergarten—I guess that's imagination—23 boards reduced special education programs, 44 boards reduced transportation services and 42 boards cut custodial and maintenance budgets. I guess they cut custodial and maintenance budgets and, as a result—

Mr Dunlop: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I thought the bill was about the elimination of the teacher

testing program. This has nothing to do with the teacher testing program. He's grandstanding over here. He keeps staring over in my direction, and the bottom line is, he should be—

The Acting Speaker: You may take your seat.

Mr Dunlop: Is that not a point of order?

The Acting Speaker: I've heard your point of order. The member for Sault Ste Marie.

Mr Oraziatti: I guess we've incited some tension here, but the reality is that this speaks to the relationship that the past government had with teachers in education, their treatment of teachers and their treatment of the entire education system. It's unfortunate that the member fails to see the correlation here, but there definitely is one.

While private school funding increased by \$3,500 per student, public school education funding decreased by \$1,250 per student—not my idea of supporting public education.

Student achievement flat-lined for grade 3 testing. Passing rates in reading rose only to 50%, where they have stayed since 1999. Math has fallen from 61% to 57% today. There are similar results in grade 6, with no more than a 1% improvement. This is a disgraceful record and a lack of student achievement. In an era where we had such tremendous economic stimulation in this province and where there was tremendous revenue raised, it certainly wasn't put back into education and into the students who needed the assistance and the help.

There are 15,000 fewer teachers than 10 years ago—\$385 million cost to taxpayers to fire teachers and other education workers. The number of private tutors for public school students has increased by 300% since 1995. Considering all of this reinvestment, I don't know why this had to take place, but it did, and it speaks to the lack of support in our schools and the absolutely disgraceful standards that our students are faced with and the lack of supports they have. The results are reflected in their student achievement progress.

Our students lost 24 million learning days under the Harris-Eves government. That's three times more than under the two previous governments combined. We've got 48 instances where teachers withdrew their services or were locked out. This is the kind of relationship that has haunted the education system for the past eight years. This is why the professional learning program is being repealed, because it speaks to the relationship that we want to have with our province's teachers.

What are we going to do? We're going to collaborate with our teachers, as well as principals, school boards and faculties of education. We'll gather input from parents, students and others to ensure that they have a role in support. We are going to rebuild the relationship with our education partners that has been destroyed under the past government. If we want our teachers to perform to their potential, to give back to our students, to make our students the best workers and productive citizens in this province, then we need to support them and stop attacking them.

Let me tell you, as someone who has worked in education, I certainly didn't need the provincial government leaning over me and saying, "You should support professional development." I took at least a course every year for the 10 years that I was teaching, and many of my colleagues did the same, without anyone looking over their shoulder and telling them what they should or shouldn't take. If someone travels overseas and takes slides and brings those back and shows their class, there is no recognition for any of this professional development, development that actually is very meaningful to many students in this province. There's no recognition for past educational involvement under the PLP. It was fraught with many difficulties and challenges, and it was an extremely resented piece of legislation.

We're going to create inventive and innovative mentoring programs for teachers by using more experienced teachers and their expertise. We're going to increase the number of professional development days that were cut by our past governments. We're going to enhance teacher performance appraisals so we can ensure that our teachers have the support they need to move forward.

In closing, I think this is an extremely appropriate piece of legislation. I want to commend the past speakers who have spoken in support of this. I want to commend the Minister of Education for taking the time to get out there into the ridings and meet first-hand many of the stakeholders in education, to introduce this piece of legislation that will earn trust and respect and rebuild our relationship with the education workers of this province.

Mrs Liz Sandals (Guelph-Wellington): I'm pleased to speak tonight on Bill 82, the act to repeal the professional learning program, or as it is often called, the teacher testing program. I want to note first of all that, yes, we are repealing this program, but the purpose of this is so we can replace it with something better, something that actually works.

I'd like to speak a bit from my perspective as a person who was a trustee for 15 years, because our friends in the opposition here, the members of the former Tory government, sometimes make the accusation that we're repealing this so we can pander to the teachers' unions. So I'd like to tell you what this particular program looked like, the professional development record of the Tories, from the point of view of management, because that's what I was. I was a trustee; I was management.

So let's set the stage here. When the Tories came in in 1995, we had a salary grid—still do, in fact—for teachers that encourages upgrading. Teachers are rewarded for going and taking university courses. After they take a certain number of relevant courses, their salary can be upgraded. In fact, we found that the vast majority of teachers were, in fact, upgrading their qualifications, either by taking university courses during the summer or at night school or by taking workshops in summer institutes that were supplied by their own boards.

Then the Tories got into the act. The first thing that Mr Johnson, the former Minister of Education and, I take it, the current candidate in Don Valley East, is it, for the

Alliance—excuse me, the Conservatives. Anyway, he came in and he cancelled most of the professional development days and, at the same time, changed every piece of curriculum in the province of Ontario.

Let me give you a parallel. The biggest employer in the manufacturing sector in my town is auto manufacturing. So suppose you had an auto parts plant and you got a contract to produce a new product, a new part. You retooled your assembly line. You've got your assembly line all set up to produce a new part. You call your employees in and you say to the employees, "No training on this one, folks. You figure it out yourselves. Go on the line there and see if you can figure out how to put this part together. And oh, by the way, we're going to start shipping the product today." That's essentially what happened: They cancelled professional development days and said, "Now deliver a whole new curriculum without any training." If I suggested that to a manufacturer, I'd get laughed out of town, but that's what happened.

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Then the Tories made a campaign promise. They said, "We're going to test teachers, and if they fail the test, we're going to kick them out of the profession." This was a dumb promise. However, Tories were always very proud of keeping promises, even dumb ones. So they referred this to the college of teachers, because the college of teachers, as with any other professional college, any self-regulating profession, is supposed to be in charge of the professional development of its members.

So they said to the college of teachers, "Figure out this teacher testing promise we made." To their credit, the college of teachers did a huge amount of research. They went to some of the southern states that had actually tried this scheme, and guess what they found out? It really was a dumb idea. It didn't work. So then they started looking at professions in Ontario and their professional—they looked at professions all over the world that had good professional development products. They consulted with all the different stakeholders in the education system. They put together a series of recommendations and went back to the Tory government and said, "Here's a proposal, what we think will actually work, and we have substantial agreement from all the stakeholders: teachers, principals, directors, trustees, parents, students. We think this will work."

The government said, "Well, maybe, but it doesn't actually look like teacher testing, and we said we're going to do teacher testing. So it has to be teacher testing." So they substantially ignored the recommendations that were put forward by the college. Instead, they came up with this idea that there would be 14 courses, seven of which would be determined by the provincial government, which, of course, knew all. There would have to be a testing component, because after all, this has to be called teacher testing. So there would be a testing component at the end of each course. This is what is officially the professional learning program, the thing that we are repealing, as I say, the teacher testing program.

So let's look at this from the point of view of management. Did this work? Well, suppose you had a teacher who was struggling, who maybe had some weaknesses and needed some help to really get on top of their profession. As management, as a principal in a school, I don't want the provincial government saying, "Go take these seven courses." I want to be able to say to that teacher, "You have a problem here, and you have a problem here. Here is where you can get some help that's going to help you improve the things you need to improve."

Suppose we had new curriculum—and we did everywhere. I want to be able to go into the school, and the principal wants to be able to go into the school and say, "We have a new math curriculum. We want the teachers in this school to focus on the new math curriculum so we can improve the math results. We don't want the provincial government saying, 'Take these seven courses,' on something you don't need courses on. We want you to learn how to teach the new curriculum. What are up-to-date teaching methodologies? How do we deliver this new curriculum?"

Suppose, on the other hand, that you're trying to recruit some teachers into your leadership development stream—and this is a big issue, because young teachers got so frustrated watching what principals were going through under this scheme that there's a real problem out there recruiting. In order to recruit people into the leadership development stream, they have to take a master's of education, and they have to spend two summers doing principals courses to learn to be a principal. They don't have time to take seven courses the provincial government dreamed up. So this was a problem in terms of trying to recruit and train new leadership.

Similarly, with new people to be superintendents—again, same problem. If you're taking these courses that the Tories thought you needed, you don't have time to go and get the proper qualifications to be a new supervisory officer. So this didn't work for the management side of the board any more than it worked for rank-and-file teachers.

So, in fact, as some of my opposition friends here are suggesting, the government said to the boards, "Well, you know, you used to do these professional development workshops. You used to do these summer institutes. Let's count them as some of the courses. But, oh, by the way, there has to be a grading component at the end."

This sounds simple, but the professional development workshops were offered by volunteer teachers, the summer institute courses were offered by volunteer teachers, and while they were perfectly happy to share their skills and expertise with their colleagues, they weren't perfectly happy to volunteer sitting around marking their colleagues. What we began to see was that if you said this was a Tory course, you couldn't get people to come and take it and you certainly couldn't get people to volunteer to teach it any more. So again, this presented a problem, not just for teachers but for management.

Let's look at what happened to teacher morale. Any business management model says that employee morale matters. So what happened? We had ads that said teachers were duds, we had labour turmoil, we had the kerfuffle over extracurricular activities, we had all the new curriculum, but finally we worked our way through all that. Things began to calm down. And then what happened? They threw in the bomb of the PLP, the teacher testing, and blew everything up again, which had everybody totally frustrated all over.

I'm supporting the repeal of this bill.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I ordinarily would have been on my way home now, but I was drawn into the conversation. I know just how important it is to have a self-regulating authority for any profession, and I think all persons here with any professional designation would know that.

What normally happens here are two things. The composition of the governance model is extremely important. In fact, this was recommended by the consultation on the For the Love of Learning document. It also said in that document that they should be self-regulating, that there should be a college that has a certain structure.

The problem is, the NDP did that study, in all fairness. I would say David Cooke was the Minister of Education who initiated this consultation. But where it became a problem is, who is actually qualified to be on the college? As it turns out, in all fairness, the structure of the governance model now is that the union runs it. Let's be honest: It's the unions running it. That's the deal. They didn't want to recognize OISE or anyone who didn't have a teaching certificate; that is, a dues-paying member. That's the issue here. Don't let anyone obfuscate or fool you in any way. That's issue number one.

The validation of ongoing education: my daughter, my sister, my wife are all teachers, and I think they work very hard. I would never discredit the work they do and the contribution they make to informing other people's lives. I would say 99% of them, like politicians, work very hard—except for the Liberals, of course.

My point is that the issue here was the ongoing learning in a highly technical environment. I think the learning that goes on and how it goes on—the unions required teachers not to take the courses that were put on by boards of education or OISE, and it's a shame that you've—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Further questions and comments?

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): The fact of the matter is that this program, as it was developed under the Conservatives, was one more attempt, one more effort and one more bit of evidence that what they really wanted to do during the whole time, during the whole eight years they were there, was to bash teachers. This was part and parcel of that effort to denigrate, to downgrade, to undermine those people who spend a lot of time working with our children in the classroom and whose efforts in that regard we want to support.

My approach really comes from more of a personal level because my sister-in-law is what you would define, I think, as a relatively new teacher; she's been in the classroom in the last three years. We've had some discussions about this particular program and she expressed three concerns about it. First of all, that there was a cost to it, and for a number of new teachers coming out of the system, after having a BA, after having two more years, they were already experiencing significant debt with respect to their education. So the application of 14 more courses and the costs teachers had to cover was yet one more thing they were trying to cope with when many of them already had a burden with respect to the debt they were coming out of university with.

1950

Secondly, we went over the courses at one point in time. She talked to me about them and what the synopsis was for each. I found it really difficult to see how relevant some of these courses were with respect to her situation as a new teacher in the classroom. Frankly, as she read through the courses and read through the synopses for me, I couldn't see that they were relevant at all to what she was coping with as a new teacher in a classroom in a high school of 1,500 kids.

Thirdly, what she really needed as a young teacher was not irrelevant courses but a lot of mentoring from more senior teachers in that school about how to deal with kids who were acting out, how to deal with kids whom she suspected were being abused at home, how to deal with kids who weren't engaged in the classroom, whom she needed to be engaged in order to learn.

That's what we should be doing. The effort under the Tories was really to bash teachers one more time.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments.

Ms Laurel C. Broten (Etobicoke-Lakeshore): I'm very pleased to join in the debate tonight and give my support to Bill 82, the Professional Learning Program Cancellation Act, and to thank my colleagues who spoke very eloquently before me this evening.

I think the common theme of what they had to say is that the war against teachers is over and this government is going to treat hard-working teachers in this province with the respect and professionalism they deserve.

Over the last many months, I've had a great deal of time and opportunity to spend time with teachers. As a professional myself, as someone coming out of the legal profession, I've talked to them about the fact that you need to mentor young, new professionals. This act and this change that our government is making is part and parcel of a new direction that we are going to take to make sure that our teachers are highly qualified and highly trained, that they know we value them and their government is behind them. Which one of us does not remember a teacher in our life who made a big difference? Which one of us cannot think back to a time when someone excited in us the love of learning? Those are our teachers.

My nephew is here at the Legislature today, and as I speak to him about what he loves about school, he talks

about his teachers. He tells me about the teachers who invigorate him, who teach him, who make him love learning. Those new young teachers who are coming in, as my colleagues before have said, don't need yet another course, yet another day away from school. What they need is someone to teach them the ropes, someone to mentor them, someone to guide them.

Our government is going to start talking to teachers, respect them as partners in this learning process, respect them as professionals, work with them to develop new mentoring programs, professional development days, enhanced summer programs and increase the role of teachers in appraising each other.

I am very much in favour of Bill 82, and I'm pleased to stand in support of it today.

Mr Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): Bill 82 is a sop to the unions, the teachers' unions. It's not surprising that the NDP and Liberals are in bed on this particular issue, because when they were in government, from 1985 to 1995, they did nothing—nothing—to address the problems we had in our education system.

I walked across this floor to talk to the Minister of Education at the time in the Liberal government. I walked across this floor to talk to the Minister of Education of the NDP government at that time. They said to me, "Norm, every time we take a step forward, the union pushes back two steps."

Mike Harris and the Progressive Conservative government had the gall, the guts, the fortitude to go forward with a challenge to the teaching profession. We brought forward the college of teachers, and what happened? The union pushed back and took control of the college of teachers.

This is nothing other than a payback to placate the unions, the teachers' unions, and betray the trust legislators have to the children of Ontario. This is a bad bill. It goes back on accountability for our teaching profession, which was introduced in this Legislature and introduced into this province. It was, unfortunately, needed. I come from a long line of teachers, as you do, Mr Speaker.

It's not surprising to see this government cave on Bill 82 to another union, another time, because they owe it to them. They went out and worked for them in the election. It's payback time—no accountability.

The Acting Speaker: The Minister of Education has two minutes to reply.

Hon Mr Kennedy: I extend my thanks to all members of the House who made questions and comments. I would simply say that we stand here in the House, as we have done often in the last number of months, repairing things that are broken, repairing things that didn't need to be broken. In this case, a broken trust: a trust on behalf of students that was thwarted by the perspective we just heard; a trust that got broken because a certain government with a certain perspective can't distinguish between the run of teachers in this province, 115,000—fewer than 20% took one course under this. When they should have taken six or seven, 80% didn't even take one course.

Thankfully this former government couldn't tell the difference. They had their personal political agenda. They needed to attack somebody. They needed to be against something. They needed to be about something negative. Instead of the trust that they had, instead of the obligation that they had to students in this province, they felt they could take it out on people.

What did they do? They did this professional learning program knowing full well that it would undermine the abilities of classrooms to function, but that was a price they were prepared to pay, a price they were prepared to make students pay on their behalf.

We stand in a province with people who understand well, the people who sit in corners of the Albany Club and worry about unions taking things away from them. Instead, we say to you, we respect teachers in this province. We respect the professionals and the workers—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Would the Minister of Education take his seat, please? I'll have order in this House, please. Minister of Education.

Hon Gerard Kennedy: We respect the teachers and workers in this province, because we know our job isn't the one of sitting in comfortable chairs in the Albany Club; it's to make this province work again, it's to make public services work again and it's to live up to the trust we have to see the children of this province reach their potential. Teachers are going to be the way we make it happen.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate.

Mr Dunlop: Can I ask for unanimous consent to have our leadoff time put off to another time, please?

The Acting Speaker: The member for Simcoe North has sought the unanimous consent of the House to defer the leadoff speaker for the Conservative Party. Agreed? Agreed.

Mr Dunlop: I appreciate the fact that you have allowed—Mr Flaherty, who is our critic for education, is not able to attend the House tonight.

Interjections.

Mr Dunlop: I never said one thing when the government members spoke, and here we are, the heckling begins. If you want me to sit down and you don't want to hear the—

The Acting Speaker: Take your seat. The member for Simcoe North has the floor. I would ask all members of the House to allow him to make his presentation uninterrupted.

Mr Dunlop: The fact of the matter is, Mr Speaker, I didn't heckle the government members when they had the leadoff period, only the member from Sault Ste Marie for his ridiculous statements.

I am pleased to rise this evening to speak on a 20-minute allocation of time for this particular bill, An Act to amend the Ontario College of Teachers Act, 1996 to cancel the Professional Learning Program, or as we call it, the loss of accountability in the classroom act, or the unions win act.

It's really simple. I wouldn't expect anything but this type of legislation from this government. Obviously, we knew the way the critic for education had fearmongered before the election, for the last four years that I'd seen him. I know this was a promise Mr Kennedy had made as the critic for education. That's a promise he had made to the teachers' unions across this province: to get rid of the teacher testing program, as we know it. You know what? I commend him for doing it. At least they've kept one promise they made to somebody. At least they've kept something.

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The fact of the matter is, I don't agree with the bill. I know there are many people among my constituents who don't believe in it either. I'm not so sure every teacher believes in this particular piece of legislation. I have to tell you—the teacher testing program, or whatever we want to call it here, the professional learning program—I had many more complaints about things like health care in my first term in Parliament than I ever had about the professional learning program. There were a few people who came forward. I got a few letters. Of course, some of the leaders of the teachers' unions in our area made complaints. But I thought that the teachers I had met, the teachers who came to my office, the teachers who wrote letters, the teachers I met at functions, didn't seem to be particularly alarmed at the professional learning program. But Mr Kennedy led that attack as the critic for the Ministry of Education, and at that point he won. They are the government, and they have every right to put this particular piece of legislation forward, and I expect other legislation will follow as a result of that.

For example, if you listened to some of the speeches in the leadoff by the government, you'd think that every move we'd made in education was wrong—

Interjection.

Mr Dunlop: You're the government now, and you can change whatever you want.

We reduced the number of school boards in the province of Ontario to 72. I guess that was a mistake, according to the Liberals. So you can replace it with 135 or 137, whatever was there before. I'm looking forward to seeing all those new administrators being hired into the education system, because, you know what? We must have made a mistake when we got rid of 60 or 70 school boards, and I look forward to seeing the Liberal government replace them. You know what? That's what we need in education—more bureaucracy. We need more administrators. We need more supervisors. We don't need that money going into the classroom; we need more administrators. I'm looking forward to seeing Mr Kennedy, the Minister of Education, and Mr McGuinty go back to the old times when it was so wonderful, and we can have 150 school boards. That would be a good step forward.

The student-focused funding formula: That had to be a mistake. I heard nothing but complaints from the Minister of Education and the education Premier over there. He talked all the time about the student-focused

funding formula. Well, why haven't they changed it? Why wouldn't your first piece of legislation be to return to the old days, when we didn't have it? I haven't seen it yet. You'd think that would be the first thing you'd want to do. Instead of the professional learning program, you'd think you'd want to return to the days when we didn't have the student-focused funding formula program. I guess that's what it's all about.

I heard the honourable member from—I believe it's Saint Ste Marie—is that right?

Interjection.

Mr Dunlop: I'm sorry. He talked about the loss of revenue in your schools, or the loss of money directed toward the students. I don't know where he got that from.

Let me tell you what happened in my first four years, including part of this year, since I was elected as a member of Parliament. I'm going to talk to you about my two school boards—the two major school boards, the two largest school boards—Simcoe County District School Board in the county of Simcoe and Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board. In 1999-2000, the Simcoe County District School Board received total funding of \$311 million. By 2003-04, that increased to \$381 million. Now, I'm not a mathematician, and I don't intend to be, but I think I'm better than McGuinty is at math. I'll tell you one thing: That's a \$70-million increase. Do you know how many more students we had? We had 50,774 students in 1999-2000, and we had an additional 1,500 students in 2003-04. So those 1,500 students received from the Tories—the people that, to you, apparently hate education—\$70 million extra. That's one board.

Now, let's go to the Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board. In 1999-2000, that board received \$123 million in funding for the year. In 2003-04, that was increased by \$38 million to \$161 million, and they had an additional 1,400 students. Now, I don't know where you got the decrease in funding, because that's a fact. We just took that off the Minister of Education's Web site last week—unless he changed it and made it look good for us, but that's the number I received from the Ministry of Education on the grant allocation sheets.

I'm looking forward to a lot more money, because this guy is the education Premier. He owes every school board. He owes all the trustees, like the member from Guelph-Wellington. He owes them all. All the teaching organizations, all the education stakeholders are owed by Mr Kennedy and Mr McGuinty. I expect to see a lot more money flowed into the education system.

What I'm seeing in the budget—and I hope I'm right on this. I understand that you will, in 2007-08, go to \$17.7 billion from what I guess is \$15.6 billion this year, which is the amount of money we flowed in 2003-04. That is, apparently, a \$2.1-billion increase.

But now we have something new to pull money from: the health care premium. That's where we'll be getting it from. Any additional funding, of course, just like the sewers and water and potholes, will come from the health care premium. We'll flow that money into the education

system. That's fair, because we already know that it's health—a healthy education, a healthy lifestyle, healthy food in the schools—so it has to flow from the health care premium that we understand was originally supposed to go just toward health, but now we're finding it's going everywhere.

I want to speak a little bit about the teaching profession. I'm very interested in the comments made by the government members, because a lot of them referred to the fact that they either were teachers or had a number of teachers in their families, and they referred back. Nobody is against teachers, nobody that I know, and I think it's so unfair to try to label a political party or any particular person in this Legislature as being opposed to the teaching profession.

For example, Mr Speaker, I don't have to look any further than you. I believe the Speaker is married to a teacher, a very lovely person, and I know she does a great job in the boards down in her area.

I have a number of teachers in my family. My mother-in-law is a teacher. She's a great teacher. My mother-in-law taught me in grade 1. Her name is Mary Taylor. She's a great lady. One of her specialties, all through those years that she spent both in the public board and the Catholic board—she actually taught in Victoria Harbour with the Catholic sisters at that time. The nuns were teaching in the school as well, and she taught with them. For years, she won every music festival around with her rhythm band. She'd take these little kids in grade 1 and kindergarten and teach them how to play music. I'm very proud of that. I know I'm not a teacher. I came from a construction background and a political background. I'm not a teacher, but I do really respect my mother-in-law and what she did in that field. She's a great lady, and I think she likes me too.

I look at our friends. I was out with friends of ours last Friday night. The young lady, who is a teacher, and her husband asked us to go away on a vacation with them this winter. I'm pretty proud of that, because I'm a Tory. I would think they would never invite me on a vacation, but I was asked to go on a vacation. We're seriously considering that next winter and looking forward to that, because they are good friends. We often tease each other about politics and education. I'm quite sure my friend worked for the Liberals, but she's a great lady and friends enough that they want us to go away on a vacation with them this coming winter.

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The other thing—and I've got to say this in a very, very positive manner. What I want to say is, one of the nice things I've found about being an MPP in my riding of Simcoe North is that—I lost contact with a lot of people who were the educators when I went to public school and high school, that is, elementary and secondary school; I like to make sure the terminology's right. I've been able to get to know a lot of my former teachers. They're now retired and many of them are living in the city of Orillia particularly.

I met, for example, my former science and chemistry teacher in high school, Reid Asselstine, one of the top people in the Rotary Club in the city of Orillia, just a workaholic in all the different service organizations.

And I got to meet my former English teacher. Her name was Molly Brien. Molly taught me English in grade 9 and in grade 13. Molly was a fantastic teacher. I wasn't into Shakespeare and all that sort of thing too much, but I can tell you that she made it fun in the classroom. I've met her again. She's married today, and I was at her husband's 80th birthday party. It was great to see her again, and we chatted. Whenever I go up to the Washago area or the Ramona area I get to see Miss Brien. She's a great lady.

These were the kind of people I had as teachers. I really did appreciate them, and I appreciate them today. In fact, I've been able to attend so many of their anniversaries, 50th anniversary parties, their birthdays, 80th and 75th birthdays. It's great to be there. They were people I respected so much. They never talked a lot about teacher testing or any of those sorts of things. I have gained a lot of respect for those people, not only when I was in secondary school but later on as I became an MPP and got to reacquaint myself with many of these people. They are leaders in our community. Many of them are close to retirement or are now retired. They're doing a great job and are respected members of the community.

I wanted to add that, because it's important that we're not branded as people who are opposed to teaching. It's easy for you to sit on that side of the room. We believe that the professional learning program was a step in the right direction. As the new government, you have every right to change that particular piece of legislation. Obviously, we're going to vote against it, but we're not surprised by any means that you would do it. You owe the teaching unions. It's as simple as that. You owe them, and that's a fact of life.

But what got me was Earl Manners. Earl Manners did not run for the Liberals. He ran for the NDP, against my friend and colleague Laurie Scott in Haliburton-Victoria-Brock. Some of the people most opposed to the government never ran for the Liberals. I thought Earl would follow the education Premier over there, because he talked about education all the time. Of course, he kind of had a conflict, because his wife's a teacher. But the bottom line is that he—

Interjection.

Mr Dunlop: We're getting some heckling from over there.

I just wanted to add a little bit of background to this and add a couple of the details that I thought should be added.

I'd like to put on the record that the professional learning program is being cancelled as a direct payback for the support from teachers' unions. For example, I wanted to add some of the dollars that the unions actually gave to the Liberal Party of Ontario in the last election: the elementary teachers' federation, \$13,400; the Toronto Catholic teachers, \$15,000; the Ontario English Catholic

Teachers' Association, \$7,500; and the Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation, \$9,600.

I'm not sure what they gave to the New Democratic Party. Obviously, they must have given close to the same amount, because Earl turned out and ran for the New Democratic Party in the last election.

If there's any compliment I want to give to the Minister of Education, it's that he branded us well in the last election. You won the election, and I think it took a lot of the education stakeholders to help in that victory. I'm not so sure they're all so happy now. You've still got over three years to keep them happy. I'm not sure they'll be on your side when time flows around and we end up at the next provincial election, which I believe is scheduled for October 4, 2007. Now, that's unless the Premier walks down the hall early. He still has the right to do that, which you're not bragging about in your legislation or bill that's been introduced.

The bottom line is that we on this side of the House will not support this legislation. We think it is a step backwards. We think it could be refined. There's no question that any piece of legislation can be refined. If I can give an example, as you all know—well, I don't know how many people are familiar with the transportation segment of the student-focused funding formula. That took from 1997 till today to actually get resolved. There has been an ongoing dispute over how we funded transportation, and some of your school boards are finding that out right now: Some are getting large increases in the amount that's allocated to the board and others are getting decreases because they've likely been overpaid for a number of years.

Mr Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): Under your government.

Mr Dunlop: I hear some heckling going on over here, but one of the things that I want to point out is that in almost all these cases, committees made up of professional stakeholders from the education field made up the regulations and the legislation. It wasn't Mike Harris and it wasn't Ernie Eves and it wasn't Janet Ecker and Dave Johnson. It was the professionals in the Ministry of Education and in the school boards who actually created the regulations and the formulas. Our job was to move it forward, and we were proud of that. We think we did that job very well.

As we look forward to the future, it's important that we all realize that education is a very, very important part of the future of this province. I hope that the move today to eliminate this program works out to be positive in the end. We've all got children and grandchildren, and we'll have those people in the future in our education system. We need to realize that this is very important for the future of the province as we educate our young people, and hopefully we can move Ontario and our country ahead in a very positive manner.

I really appreciate the opportunity today. Again, I'd like to thank all the members of the House for allowing us to defer the leadoff. Mr Flaherty is tied up tonight, but he'll be eager to get back in here and talk about education

in the leadoff time whenever the next reading comes up. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Ms Martel: With all due respect to the member, I would have liked to hear what Mr Flaherty has to say this evening. I'll look forward to hearing exactly what he has to say about the education issues in this bill in particular. I'm sure it'll be really enlightening.

Let me say with respect to the comments of the member from Simcoe North, I'm not surprised at the position your caucus has taken. You were the folks who brought in this program in the first place, so I'm not surprised that you're opposing it this evening.

I guess I am surprised about the comments you made with respect to branding, referring to the Liberals as trying to brand you in some way with respect to education. I've got to tell you, I think you guys did that all on your own by what you did over eight years in terms of education, and teachers in particular. I don't think there are very many people out there who don't think of the Conservatives and think of teachers and think of bashing all in the same sentence, because frankly, that was really the history of what went on for the eight years under your government. I find that really regrettable.

My parents were both teachers—my father was a principal for many years before he came to this place—my brother's a teacher, my sister-in-law's a teacher, and I have another brother who's qualified to teach but chooses not to. So we come from a family where they were either teachers or politicians. I found very regrettable, over the last eight years, the high-handed manner in which the former government treated teachers. There really was an all-out effort to undermine, to underrate, to devalue the work these folks do. I regretted that from the perspective of someone who has relatives who were teachers and as someone who has children in the school system and who really appreciates the work teachers do. I don't think I could do the work teachers do, not now, not given all the constraints and concerns they have to deal with. I just found it really regrettable that that was the attitude taken, and I hope things are now changing.

2020

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): I'm pleased to rise to respond to the members for Simcoe North and Lanark-Carleton. One of the saddest parts of the history of Ontario is eight years where the honourable profession of educators had been denigrated and demoralized by the politics of division and the extreme neo-cons who came into this province in 1995—

Laughter.

Ms Di Cocco: And they laugh. It is this history that has done the most damage to our education system. Professionals were treated in such a way—the education system is made up of professionals who teach our kids. Our students are not better for the eight years this government had power in this province.

It is a sad tale when we look at having to try to undo so much moral damage that was done to the teaching profession. Even the way it was structured: They talked

about the profession of teaching, saying, "These teachers need to be tested," relegating them to a childish—testing is not about professional development. Testing implies that they don't know something.

We have a lost generation. We have teachers who can hardly wait to get out of the profession because they feel so denigrated, and they were great teachers. I say that we are going to turn that around, because good education is about respecting our teachers.

Mr John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): Respect for teachers? I can certainly identify with that. My mother was a teacher by profession.

Mr Rinaldi: Is she still your mother?

Mr Yakabuski: She's no longer with us, Lou, but she spent the 18 years after she got married having 14 children, so she didn't have any time for teaching. I also have a brother who's a teacher and many friends who are teachers, some of whom I play hockey with, so I know the vital work they do. I also have children in the school system, and I can tell you, a good teacher can change a student's outlook on life by the way they assist in their development. I have seen with my own daughter how her attitude changed by having a particular teacher in grade 6 who challenged her. Last year, in grade 8, she was the only student in her school who was awarded the Renfrew County Medallion for her academic achievements, and I give the teacher she had in grade 6 a great deal of credit for challenging my daughter to be the very best that she could be.

The teacher testing program was about exactly that: challenging our teachers to be the very best they can be and offering to them the opportunity to improve themselves so they can challenge people like my daughter to be the very best they can be. It is not about attacking teachers. That is how they would like to portray it, because they parlayed that into an alliance, if you want to call it that, in the previous election so they could garner the support of the unions to defeat this government. This bill is about payback for helping to defeat the government. It's not about improving education. The changes we made in education are still going to be in place, because they were positive.

Mr Rinaldi: It's a pleasure to stand and comment on the comments of our friend from Simcoe North. It's interesting to see him in the denial stage, where it didn't happen. I can tell you, I treat teachers as special people. I do have a daughter who's a teacher, but I'm not speaking to defend her profession. I had the opportunity to become a teacher some 25, 30 years ago, but I wasn't cut out to be a teacher.

Mr Sergio: And look what happened to you.

Mr Rinaldi: That's right. Look what happened to me.

In the last eight years, being involved in municipal politics and dealing with some of the things the former government did and how they treated teachers, I was glad I made that decision, even though it was 25 or 30 years ago, because I know I couldn't work under those conditions.

I've had the privilege—I don't have the numbers because I didn't think I was going to be addressing this tonight, but I've probably visited some 30 schools since I've had the pleasure of serving my riding: grade 5, grade 10 and some grade 12 classes. Let me relate to you an incident two weeks ago Friday, where I was at Plainville public school, just north of Cobourg. I walked into the school to speak to a grade 5 class. I was welcomed by the principal and about four or five teachers. It was just like God walking into the room. I was welcomed with open arms. It was certainly refreshing to believe that I was going to their school to talk to the kids, to talk to the teachers. I also had the privilege to talk to the student council, because that day was pizza day. It was nice for those mothers who were there volunteering their time to be able to be in a different environment.

We've made great strides, and recognizing teaching as a profession, a real profession, is certainly making some headway.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Simcoe North has two minutes to reply.

Mr Dunlop: I want to thank the members from Nickel Belt, Sarnia-Lambton, Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke—my colleague—and Northumberland for their comments tonight. There are times when it's actually kind of fun to be here in the evenings to take part in these debates and listen to the concerns.

I guess the bottom line is really this: I'm looking forward to all the changes in education. I was told over and over again that things like the student-focused funding formula and the removal of school boards in this province—we thought we had too many school boards, and of course the Liberals and the NDP thought they were in adequate numbers. I'm looking forward to that legislation coming in. I want to put that on the record. Let's make sure we get rid of the student-focused funding formula. We support it, but we know that you don't like it, so I'm waiting for that piece of legislation to come forward.

Interjection.

Mr Dunlop: It treats everybody fairly. If anyone knows how the student-focused funding formula works, it does treat people fairly, but you're going to eliminate that. I'm assuming that's going to happen. I'm looking forward to all those administrators being hired, and those supervisors and all those bureaucrats in those Taj Mahals we have. I'm looking forward to another 50 or 60 of those being built across the province to restore it to the good old days. Let's restore it to the good old days, when everything was so wonderful. In 1991, our Simcoe county school board built a \$12 million—we called it the Taj Mahal. We asked them not to build it because the kids were in portables. I still remember those days. I hope we don't go back to those days, but I'm afraid this government is taking us exactly in that direction, back to those good old days.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Ms Martel: Speaker, I'd like to ask for unanimous consent to stand down our lead and for me to do a 20-minute rotation.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Nickel Belt has sought unanimous consent to stand down the lead for her party. Agreed? Agreed.

Ms Martel: We were actually told that it was going to be a different bill debated in here tonight, so Mr Marchese came in with the wrong set of notes and I told him I would cover for him. He will be prepared to do an hour leadoff on another day. So let me say a few things here tonight.

The professional learning program really was and has been an extension of an ongoing battle against teachers that started when the Conservatives were first elected and formed the government. This extension of the crisis in education was really started by Mr Snobelen. A number of us who have been here for some time will remember that one of the first things he did as Minister of Education was to hold a large forum in a government building with many of his ministry staff to tell them that the government was going to have a crisis in education, essentially to get through the reforms it wanted. He was caught on tape doing that; he was quite open about it when confronted with it. That was really where we started in terms of education reform—and I say that very loosely—under this government.

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The minister of the day, the first Minister of Education under the Conservative government, wanted a crisis in education, and he got it. The reality is that over the next eight years it was students, parents, teachers, administrators and staff in the schools who suffered as a result. I just think back to the schools in our area and what the loss has been in those schools over the last eight years. The reality very clearly is—and I don't know how the member for Simcoe North could not admit this—that there was a cut in real funding for education over that period of time and that cut resulted in very negative consequences in so many of our schools. It resulted in, for example, a loss of special-education assistants in many, many boards across the province. It resulted in a tremendous increase in students who have special education needs sitting on a waiting list, probably 30,000 as we speak waiting for special-education services.

Those cuts resulted in the loss of libraries—full-time librarians and then libraries as a result—for instance, in the elementary school in my hometown. It resulted in the loss of art programs and music programs and art consultants and music consultants hired by the boards. It resulted in a loss of custodial staff in many of our schools, so the custodial staff were not in those schools on a full-time basis making sure they were safe, making sure the school grounds were safe, but instead were in on a part-time basis, and the eyes were not there watching who was coming into the schools to make sure students were safe.

Those Conservative cuts resulted in the loss in many schools of full-time vice-principal positions. In my own

community, we saw many VPs sharing schools, travelling 50, 60 kilometres to share schools in rural areas. The Conservative cuts to education resulted in school closures. Rainbow District School Board in my own community two years ago was dealing with proposals to shut down 10 schools, and most of those in fact were shut down.

The cuts resulted in bigger class sizes and in, for example, PTAs or school councils fundraising not just for school equipment, as they might have been doing before, but for textbooks and other essentials that should have been covered under the education funding formula.

That has been the impact of eight years of cuts to education. It has been very real in our communities, it has been very real in our classrooms and, frankly, it has had a very negative impact on so many students, so many parents, so many teachers and so many support staff who make education possible in our communities. That has been the legacy.

It's a little hard to listen to the member for Simcoe North tonight talk about an increase in funding in his own riding. His riding must have been the only one that got some increased funding. I've got to tell you, the boards in our area didn't see increased funding. The boards in our area have been struggling with very significant problems with the funding formula, especially because so many of them have rural schools and were so negatively impacted by the funding formula that provided funding based on square footage. The legacy in our part of the world is that the cuts have been very detrimental, and it will take a long, long time for schools in our area—staff, students and parents—to recover.

The program that we're dealing with tonight, the professional learning program, was teacher testing. You could call it by something else, try and camouflage it by naming it something else, but at the end of the day, that's what it was. It was the response to an election promise made by the Conservatives in 1999 to target this particular group and test, that being teachers.

What I found really interesting at the time, because we opposed the legislation when the Conservatives brought it in, was that the Conservatives would target a specific segment of the population for testing. There is no doubt that teachers provide tremendous service to our children, make a tremendous contribution to the learning environment our kids are involved in for so many hours of each day. The government tried in some way, shape or form during that time, as they defended this, to make the argument that because kids spend so much time with teachers in the classroom, somehow this teacher testing was necessary to determine their credentials, to make sure they stayed up to date with respect to professional development, to make sure they were qualified to be there.

But what requirements did the former government make of other professionals for testing? I look at physicians. Did the government of that day, the Conservatives, pass a bill to make some kind of requirement that physicians in Ontario had to take 14 courses every year

or two years or else they would lose their licence to practise? No, they did not.

Did the government of the day go to the college of nurses and say, "You're going to institute a program of testing for nurses, and nurses are going to have to take 14 courses every year or every second year to retain their nursing licence"? No. Conservatives didn't do that either.

Did they go to paramedics, for example, who provide high-quality services, who we rely on, and say to paramedics across the province, "Well, you folks, to keep your licence to practise, to keep your licence to have a job, you're going to take 14 or 10 or 20 courses and pay for them out of your own pocket for you to continue to qualify to operate as a paramedic"? No. Conservatives didn't do that either.

Look at police officers. Look at firefighters. Did the Conservatives say to those groups of people, "Because you provide public safety, which is critical to our society, we're going to make sure you're qualified and we're going to force you to take 14 or 20 courses a year for you to maintain your job, for you to have a licence to practise"? No, they didn't.

You know what? From my perspective, all of those categories of providers, both health care providers and I guess community safety providers, in the most generous terms, perform functions which are equally important in the life of our community. They may not spend six or seven hours a day in a classroom with our kids, but boy, when a paramedic is on my doorstep and I'm having a heart attack, I sure want to know that he or she is qualified. The services that they're going to provide to me are probably just as important as the teaching services being provided to our kids.

So across the whole spectrum of health care and community safety providers, the government in its "wisdom"—and I put quotation marks around that—decided to target one particular sector of the population: teachers, whom the government had spent the four years between 1995 and 1999 bashing, undermining, undervaluing, attacking. Any word you would like to use that is derogatory is the word you could use with respect to the Conservative government's attitude toward teachers.

Anyone who was here during the period of 1995 to 1999 and remembers some of the comments made by the Premier of the day, Premier Harris, or by Minister Snobelen, could not take it any other way than that the government really had it in for teachers.

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I don't know why Mike Harris had it in for teachers. I don't know what was in his past that made him so undervalue and undermine teachers. But the fact of the matter is, when he started on the union bosses, on teacher holidays, on the small amount of time that teachers were in the classroom, conveniently neglecting all the time that teachers spend after hours marking papers, preparing tests and involved in extracurricular activities, you could only take his comments one way, and that was that he really had it in for and was out to get teachers, in a way that, frankly, marked the Conservatives from then on.

So the teacher testing was part and parcel of what the Conservative government began in 1995, which was teacher-bashing, and carried on through the whole first term. The election promise was out there to try and grab the votes of those people who might have been dissatisfied, for some reason or another, with their child's teacher. The teacher testing promise in the election was just a way to try and grab those votes.

But it was interesting that the government never, ever, during that whole eight-year period, talked about testing any other group of society, be they health care professionals providing important health care services, day in and day out, or whether they be those providers in our community like firefighters, paramedics and police officers looking out for our public safety.

Now, I talked about my sister-in-law, because I tried to look at the impact of this teacher testing on an individual who had some experience with it. This is a new teacher—three years teaching in a very large high school in Niagara Falls with 1,500 kids. She's a secondary school teacher who's very bright. She teaches math and computers. She has a real gift—a gift I never had, I've got to tell you. Math was never my forte, and computers aren't today. So I admire her, because she is a very good teacher, teaching OAC-level students math and computers.

When the government passed this program, we had a long discussion about what it meant for her. What was it going to do for her? You know what she said to me? "I look at the list of courses that the government would like me to take—these 14 courses—and they are ridiculous. They are just ridiculous. They are not, in any way, shape or form, relevant to my experience in the classroom. They are not relevant, in any way, shape or form, to what I need to learn as a new teacher in the classroom. They are not relevant, in any way, shape or form, to what I'm experiencing as a new teacher in the classroom, with respect to the kids I'm trying to teach and their parents whom I'm trying to deal with, or with respect to the new curriculum that I am trying to implement on their behalf."

She was really clear that the courses were not relevant at all. They were completely irrelevant to her experience and her needs as a new teacher. Of course, when the government tried to sell this teacher testing program, they really focused on new teachers and why this was so necessary for new teachers, even though the new teachers were the most recent ones out of the education system, and so would have the best grasp, frankly, of all of the changes in pedagogy, in curriculum etc. They're some of the best-trained and best-qualified teachers. The government tried to focus on them.

She said to me: "You know what? If the government really wanted to try and help me out, instead of these 14 mandatory courses that I have to pay for out of my own pocket, which are totally irrelevant to my experience, if the government really wanted to make a difference in my teaching ability, the government would have a mentoring program, so that I could spend some time with senior

teachers in my big high school and get their advice and input on how to deal with students who are acting out in my classroom—the folks who are looking for any excuse to raise hell in the classroom to try and get some attention; who are totally disruptive; who make it very difficult for me to teach; who don't show respect to either me, as a teacher, or their fellow students. I could use some help talking to senior teachers about how they deal with kids whose aim seems only to be, when they come to school, to be disruptive in my classroom and others."

Was the government offering that through the teacher testing program? No, it was not.

She said to me: "I could use help dealing with students who I'm very concerned about, concerned because in my gut I think there's a real problem at home. I think there's abuse occurring at home. I'm really worried about this student who comes to school and my gut feeling is, there is a problem with abuse or assault at home. I don't know what I do about that. I don't know what I should look for. I don't know if I should be calling the CAS. I don't know what kind of intervention I should be making. I sure could use the experience of a senior teacher in this institution to give me some insight about that, so I can respond properly, so I can know what to look for, so I can know how to deal with this in the appropriate manner."

She said: "I could use some help dealing with those students in this classroom who aren't engaged. It's clear they don't want to be here. They're not disruptive, they're not acting out, but, boy, they really don't want to be here. They're not doing their homework. They're not participating in the classroom. They're not asking questions. They're not engaged with other students. They're not engaged with me in a question/answer about the curriculum that we're dealing with today. I could really use some help dealing with those students, so that I can engage them in the classroom, so that I can make this curriculum relevant to them, so that I can make it important for them to come to school every day when they really don't want to be here, so that I can be productive in ensuring that they can pass their OAC, they can graduate and go on to college or university or a trades program."

Did the government of the day offer any of that through its professional learning program? No, it did not. From my point of view, the former government was not really interested in helping those teachers. The professional learning program was a public relations exercise. It was all about being able to go back to the electorate and say, "We lived up to our promise on teacher testing, and this is how we did it." It wasn't about supporting new teachers in the classroom, making sure they had a valuable experience, make sure they had the supports necessary to really engage their students and to make sure they could enjoy learning and make sure they could actually pass.

Those are the kinds of things we need to be doing now. It's good that we're getting rid of the professional learning program. It served no useful purpose, except to

target teachers one more time in a really negative way that did not contribute to anything positive in the classroom or the education system.

But what is required now is for the government to really focus on how we support new teachers in particular, because we want to keep them in the profession and not have them leave after one or two years because they're so frustrated by the system and frustrated at not being able to get the support they need.

We really need to be clear about what programs we are going to develop to ensure that we're supporting new teachers. We need to be looking at the professional development that's going on in boards. But you know what? For many years, before the Conservatives got involved in this issue, boards were doing professional development. Every board everywhere across this province was engaged in professional development, because administrators and boards recognize as much as anyone else that if you're going to have a positive teaching experience and a positive classroom experience, you need to have your teachers engaged. You need to have their qualifications upgraded. You need to be sure they are learning the most up-to-date teaching techniques.

Professional development isn't something new, but it should go back to the hands of those boards that were doing that long before the government got involved in trying to just test teachers for political purposes.

Frankly, we need to make a major investment with the boards in professional development that is specific geographically to all of the areas of the province, and that has to happen as well.

My final point is this, because the Conservatives have said this is a payback for support in the election: I got some money from OSSTF. I got some money from OECTA. I didn't get much teacher involvement in my campaign. I disagreed with the professional learning program when it was first introduced, and I continue to disagree with it today. It's time to stop bashing teachers and be positive again.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments? The member for Pickering-Ajax—

Mr Wayne Arthurs (Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge): Before long, between Whitby-Ajax and Pickering-Ajax; it keeps changing and it will.

I'm pleased to take a couple minutes with respect to Bill 82, the cancellation of the teacher testing program. We've heard comments, and I heard members on our side talk about the denigration and demoralization of the teaching education portfolio. I suggest they were demonized by the former government for a number of years. I think it clearly started with the likes of the minister of the day, Snobelen, when he indicated he would create a crisis in education and set out to do that. He was clearly successful for the balance of not only that mandate, but the mandate that followed.

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During my time in the mayor's office, in the only march we had on city hall—and that's because the kids knew if they came to city hall they were going to get

attention—there were 200 or 300 of them who marched down the road to city hall to get attention. They knew that going to the member's office, who subsequently became the Minister of Education during her tenure, among other ministerial responsibilities—but they marched on city hall to express their discontent with what was happening in the education system. Certainly the teacher testing program did nothing to enhance the opportunities and experience of young people in our schools.

There are needs in education. As a matter of fact, the member from Simcoe North was speaking earlier about all his relationships in teaching, and certainly most of us have those. I come from a teaching background. My wife still teaches. She's a grade 1 teacher, and she heads in to class at 7 o'clock in the morning, gets home at about 5 o'clock or so in the afternoon, does a couple of hours at night. She takes her professional training very seriously, but found the imposition of something called teacher testing did not support the objectives that she has in the classroom. It didn't support the grade 1 students who need to have numeracy and literacy. It didn't support the young people who need the support of a teacher in the classroom.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments. The member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke.

Mr Yakabuski: I'm pleased to respond to the comments from the honourable member for Nickel Belt. It's clear that she is starting the early lobby campaign to get some of that support back from that powerful union so that in the next election they will be more supportive of the NDP than perhaps they were of the Liberals in the past election.

We know that this is all about the payback for the Liberal government. We know that the union was opposed to the professional learning program. That was clearly demonstrated by them over the last few years. But it was never about singling out or attacking teachers; it was about a package of educational reforms, and we're not hearing from the government when it comes to eliminating many of those reforms, because they are well aware that those reforms were good reforms which have improved the educational system in the province.

I want to talk a little bit more about teachers, because I do have the utmost respect for them. My brother's a teacher.

Interjection: Is he still your brother?

Mr Yakabuski: Yes, he is.

When I was operating the hardware store with my wife in Barry's Bay, and Martin had left Whitney—he had taught in Whitney for a few years—I used to have parents come into the store all the time and say to me, "You know, your brother changed my daughter's life"—or "my son's life"—"for the better. He was a tremendous teacher, and he got them focused on the right track." So a teacher can have a tremendous impact on a person's life.

I was talking about my daughter Emmallee earlier—

Mr John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex): So then what happened to you, John?

Mr Yakabuski: I have no idea, John.

But I also want to talk about our son Lucas, who has that same teacher this year.

Interjection.

Mr Yakabuski: Gee, two minutes just goes so fast.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I want to congratulate my friend from Nickel Belt, because I think her remarks were very insightful, in terms of what the professional learning program was all about. You will recall Liberals and New Democrats attacked this program when the Tories introduced it, as the member from Nickel Belt appropriately said.

The Tories used to call it "teacher testing." For public consumption, it was teacher testing. For teachers it was called the "professional learning program." The problem with it was it wasn't much of a learning program for teachers. It was really political in nature, not pedagogical. It was designed to say to the public, "We're finally going after this profession, because we're finally going to make them learn and teach more effectively so Johnny can read in the classroom." And that was the politics of the bill. You know that, right?

And so the member for Nickel Belt and I are together on this in saying that the Liberals are doing the right thing. I would remind the—

Applause.

Mr Marchese: Not so fast, please. We will have plenty of time to review some of the Liberal promises. I will have a whole hour, when my turn comes again, to speak to some of these deficiencies. I'm looking forward to the Liberals talking about, in terms of their funding, whether they're going to solve the problem of librarian shortages, ESL problems, special education problems, music teacher shortages, educational assistant shortages, caretaker cutbacks and all that.

Interjections.

Mr Marchese: All the Liberals are saying in unison, "Yes, yes, yes," and I'm so looking forward to September when, of course, none of these things will happen and each one of you is going to say, "Geez, we said yes, but nothing is happening." I look forward to September, but in the meantime I congratulate the member from Nickel Belt.

The Acting Speaker: Further questions and comments?

Mr Jim Brownell (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): It gives me much pleasure this evening to stand as a retired professional in the teaching profession for 32 and a half years. I can certainly speak from experience: The professional learning program was the licence to bash. It was the licence to continue the war against teachers. This is a teacher thing. It is not a union thing; this is a teacher thing.

I heard words this evening across the way that teachers support this. Well, I can tell you, I've been in many schools since I got elected, and I have not heard one teacher yet say that they support this. In fact they applaud what we're doing. They always believed they could do it on their own, as I did for 20 years. I moved from teachers' college to earning three university degrees to taking two summers at Queen's University with a principal's

course and doing other short courses. That's what I did for the spirit of educating those students that I wanted to hold on a pedestal.

That's really what was at the gut level of teacher training. It wasn't to be forced into taking a professional learning program, which really meant nothing except to once again bash the teachers, bash the profession, continue the war. We saw it with everything during the eight years.

I have to say when I was in the profession, I thought there must have been something in the early life of our former Premier of the province that created a problem with teachers. I still haven't learned it all, but one of these days I will learn it.

I certainly support doing away with the professional learning program.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Nickel Belt has two minutes to reply.

Ms Martel: I want to thank all the members who participated in the responses. Let me say a couple of things. Look, I'll say it again: This program was just an extension of the teacher-bashing that had gone on since 1995. It was one more attack on teachers, one more attack on those people who are providing incredible contributions to kids in the classroom. No one should have been surprised, because one of the first things that came out of the mouth of their first Minister of Education was that he was going to create a crisis in education, and the Conservatives surely did that.

This program was completely irrelevant to the lives of so many new teachers, who we really need to be supporting in the classroom, who needed mentoring programs, for example, to help with those kids who are being disruptive, to help with those kids who are not engaged, to help with kids who they are concerned are being abused at home.

This program provided none of that to new teachers, who really needed that kind of support, especially if we were going to keep them as teachers in the long term in

Ontario. The professional learning program was teacher testing. Call it by any other name, that's exactly what was, and the whole purpose behind it was for the Conservatives to be able to say to the electorate, "See, we kept our promise made during the 1990 campaign; we've got teacher testing"—

Mr Marchese: We beat them up good.

Ms Martel: —"and we're beating them up good; we're getting a handle on what they're doing; we're making sure they're qualified; we're making sure they are going to learn," when they didn't do that for any other segment of the population, any other group of professionals providing health care or providing emergency services or protecting public safety.

Mr Marchese: What about the Liberals?

Ms Martel: My colleague from Trinity-Spadina raises a very good point, and in the hour he has when he speaks to this, he's going to talk about what happens now. Where is the \$1 billion to \$2 billion that Rozanski said has to go back into the education system? Where is the money that the Liberals need to cap class sizes? Where is the plan so that in September we have art and music and all those other programs that the Conservatives cut? So I look forward to his speech.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate. I recognize the government House leader.

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I seek unanimous consent that the House do now adjourn and that tonight's debate be considered one full sessional day for the purposes of standing order 46.

The Acting Speaker: The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent to adjourn the House and have tonight's session be considered a sessional day for the purposes of standing order 46. Is there agreement of the House? Agreed.

This House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 am.

The House adjourned at 2101.

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CONTENTS

Wednesday 16 June 2004

SECOND READINGS

Professional Learning Program Cancellation Act, 2004,

Bill 82, *Mr Kennedy*

Mr Kennedy	2977, 2987
Mr Delaney.....	2980
Mr Berardinetti.....	2982
Mr Oraziotti.....	2983
Mrs Sandals.....	2984
Mr O'Toole	2986
Ms Martel	2986, 2990, 2992, 2996
Ms Broten.....	2986
Mr Sterling	2987
Mr Dunlop.....	2987, 2991
Ms Di Cocco	2990
Mr Yakabuski.....	2991, 2995
Mr Rinaldi	2991
Mr Arthurs.....	2994
Mr Marchese	2995
Mr Brownell.....	2995
Debate deemed adjourned	2996

TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Mercredi 16 juin 2004

DEUXIÈME LECTURE

Loi de 2004 annulant le programme de perfectionnement professionnel, projet de loi 82, <i>M. Kennedy</i>	
Débat présumé ajourné.....	2996



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First Session, 38th Parliament

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Première session, 38^e législature

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of Debates
(Hansard)**

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des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 17 June 2004

Jeudi 17 juin 2004



Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 17 June 2004

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 17 juin 2004

*The House met at 1000.
Prayers.*

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

SAFE STREETS STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LA SÉCURITÉ DANS LES RUES

Mr Lalonde moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 58, An Act to amend the Safe Streets Act, 1999 and the Highway Traffic Act to recognize the fund-raising activities of legitimate charities and non-profit organizations / *Projet de loi 58, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1999 sur la sécurité dans les rues et le Code de la route pour reconnaître les activités de financement des organismes de bienfaisance légitimes et organismes sans but lucratif.*

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 96, Mr Lalonde, you have 10 minutes to lead off.

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): I'm pleased to start off the debate today on my private member's Bill 58, the Safe Streets Statute Law Amendment Act, 2004. I decided to introduce this bill after receiving letters from municipalities and volunteer fire-fighters' associations and many calls from non-profit organizations such as the Optimist Club, the Knights of Columbus, the Lions Club and many other charities affected by the current legislation.

I would also like to thank my colleague from Essex, Bruce Crozier, today's Speaker of the House, who also inspired me to introduce this important piece of legislation. Twice before, the member for Essex has introduced similar legislation. The member for Essex first introduced Bill 64, the Safe Streets Amendment Act in April 2000, and then a year later he introduced Bill 26, the Charity Fund-Raising Activities Act.

To give you a brief history, the Safe Streets Act, Bill 8 when it was first introduced in 1999, was mainly intended to make the streets of Ontario safer. Bill 8 was a piece of legislation that addressed a wide range of issues by amending the Highway Traffic Act to regulate certain activities on roadways. For instance, Bill 8 amended the Highway Traffic Act to prohibit solicitation in an aggres-

sive manner. "Aggressive manner" was defined as follows: threatening the person solicited with physical harm by words, gestures or other means; obstructing the path of the person solicited; using abusive language during the solicitation; soliciting a person who is waiting at a taxi stand or a public transit stop; and soliciting a person who is in or on a public transit vehicle. Furthermore, this bill also prohibited people from disposing of broken glass and new or used needles in public places. This bill dealt with a broad range of issues, from prohibiting people to dispose of needles in public places to outlawing hitchhiking in Ontario.

I am not here today to defend or question the merits of the Safe Streets Act. That's a debate in itself. However, I am here because one section of the Safe Streets Act is causing problems in my riding and all across the province.

Allow me to quote Bill 8, the Safe Streets Act: "No person, while on the roadway, shall stop or approach a motor vehicle for the purpose of offering, selling or providing any commodity or service to the driver or any other person in the motor vehicle." It probably sounds harmless, but it's not. This amendment, in lame terms, finds any charitable organizations that conduct roadside events guilty of an offence; in other words, against the law. Charitable organizations, such as volunteer fire-fighters who raise money for muscular dystrophy, with a track record of fundraising for the past 50 years that's both accident- and injury-free, can be and have been shut down under the current law.

Lorsque je parle de la campagne de prélèvement de fonds pour la dystrophie musculaire, les pompiers volontiers se faisaient un plaisir de participer à cette campagne. Les pompiers, d'une façon totalement volontaire, sollicitaient sur les coins d'une rue principale de leur municipalité afin de ramasser des fonds pour en faire la présentation lors du téléthon Jerry Lewis.

C'est devenu un grand défi. Je parlais ce matin au chef des pompiers de la ville de Rockland. Il m'a dit que chaque année, on ramassait 10 000 \$ à 12 000 \$ avec ce prélèvement de fonds. L'an passé, par exemple, après 30 minutes seulement, on avait ramassé au-delà de 1200 \$, mais soudainement, la sûreté provinciale est arrivée sur les lieux et leur a dit, « Vous n'avez plus le droit de solliciter sur les coins de rue. La loi, the Safe Streets Act, vous le défend. » Donc, immédiatement, on a cessé l'opération, et toute la province a été affectée après cette arrestation.

I know it seems unbelievable, and some of my colleagues might be saying, "You know, this has never

happened in my riding." Well, I can tell these colleagues that it has been happening all over the province and that it can happen in your riding. It's just a matter of time. We all know that police officials sometimes turn a blind eye to this type of solicitation, but all it takes is one complaint from somebody who's having a bad day and doesn't feel like being charitable. If fundraising events are closed down here and there across the province, it all adds up. I can tell you, it all adds up for the non-profit organizations such as muscular dystrophy, which estimates losing three quarters of a million dollars a year, and many other organizations that have lost hundreds of thousands of dollars because of the Safe Streets Act that we have at the present time.

1010

The intent of Bill 8, the Safe Streets Act, 1999, surely wasn't to shut down volunteer fundraising events. This is why this bill, Bill 58, the Safe Streets Statute Law Amendment Act, 2004, is very straightforward legislation that would lift the current ban on roadway fundraising. Bill 58 does not interfere with any part of the Safe Streets Act.

Allow me to elaborate on the bill we are debating today. Officially, Bill 58 is entitled An Act to amend the Safe Streets Act, 1999 and the Highway Traffic Act to recognize the fundraising activities of legitimate charities and non-profit organizations. What Bill 58 does is to allow fundraising activities on the roadways if they are conducted by a charitable organization recognized by Revenue Canada, are conducted by a non-profit organization on a roadway where the maximum speed limit is 50 kilometres per hour, and are permitted by a bylaw of the municipality. Simply adding these three subsections to the Safe Streets Act would make a world of difference for so many charities and, more importantly, for so many Ontarians who benefit from these charities.

Although my opinion might be somewhat biased, I can see only benefit from this bill because, technicalities aside, this bill would put an end to the confusion surrounding legitimate fundraising on roadways for members of Parliament, police officers, municipal councils, residents of Ontario, and yes, the charities themselves, that have been so badly hurt by the unexpected and, dare I say, unwilling consequence of the Safe Streets Act.

I respectfully call upon members from all three parties to rally together and support Bill 8 for the benefit of all charities in Ontario and for the benefit of the people whom these charities help and serve so well.

Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I rise today in support of my good friend the member for Glengarry-Prescott-Russell in full support of Bill 58, an amendment to the Safe Streets Act.

As we have learned, it has had a detrimental effect on charities' fundraising efforts throughout the province of Ontario. When it was passed in 1999, it was known as the squeegee bill and its intent was to prevent panhandling in Ontario. However, it forced police services into an awkward position. Police could have shut down charitable organizations running roadside fund drives under the

current law through the complaint of just one person. Some police forces have looked the other way and allowed these fundraising drives to go ahead. However, this puts police officers in a very compromising position. It is not their job to pick and choose which laws they should enforce. Bill 58 would eliminate this confusion and would ensure that charities are not breaking any laws in this province.

This bill, if passed, will allow charities to resume holding fundraisers on roadways where the speed limit is not more than 50 kilometres an hour. It is simple and straightforward. It should be passed promptly.

The Muscular Dystrophy Association of Canada is one organization that overwhelmingly supports this bill. Firefighters from across the province raised \$750,000 for muscular dystrophy every Labour Day weekend. The Muscular Dystrophy Association of Canada expects to lose this amount each year because of the way the current bill reads. But it's not only the Muscular Dystrophy Association of Canada that will continue to suffer under this legislation in its current form. Shinerama, a student-run street campaign for cystic fibrosis, collected hundreds of thousands of dollars across Ontario.

Just last weekend, I attended the Special Olympics spring games in my riding of Peterborough. It was a marvellous event that brought together hundreds of athletes from across the province. The Special Olympics program culminates in the winter, spring and summer games. Athletes are given a chance to compete in such sports as skating, swimming, bowling, and track and field. During these spring games, I was able to witness first-hand the excitement of the athletes experiencing and participating in these games. The athletes' hard work and dedication that brought them to the games was truly inspiring. I am sure many friendships were formed during the games.

None of this would have been possible without the Special Olympics program. Often set up through our schools, the program gives children and adults with intellectual disabilities a chance to try different sports. This may not seem so out of the ordinary—a child trying out sports is a very common thing—but for the Special Olympics, it is not just about sports. It is about becoming empowered. It's about becoming more involved and better integrated within our communities. Without the Special Olympics fundraising efforts, the dream would be an unattainable goal.

Fundraising drives such as the Law Enforcement Torch Run contribute valuable funds to the Special Olympics. This bill will ensure Special Olympians will continue to participate in sports in their hometowns, as well as take part in such events as the spring games. This bill will ensure funding will continue to flow to research for muscular dystrophy and cystic fibrosis. This bill will ensure our minor hockey organizations, our soccer leagues and our schools won't be penalized for their fundraising efforts.

I would urge quick passage of Bill 58. I'm sure we all know someone personally who has benefited from the

work of these charitable organizations. Let's not take away the ability of our charities to fundraise.

M. Gilles Bisson (Timmins-Baie James): Premièrement, je veux dire de la part du parti néo-démocrate qu'on va appuyer ce projet de loi mis par mon ami M. Jean-Marc Lalonde. Nous savons tous que M. Lalonde, quand ça vient parfois à parler de ces dossiers qui sont importants pour les plus démunis dans cette communauté de l'Ontario, a toujours été une personne qui comprend l'importance pour l'État de jouer un rôle positif envers ces individus.

Il faut mettre un peu en contexte ce qui est arrivé. Il faut prendre l'opportunité; après tout, c'est un débat politique qu'on a ici aujourd'hui. Vous savez, monsieur le Président, que ça ne fait pas tellement longtemps—ça fait, je pense, quatre ou cinq ans, quand le gouvernement conservateur était au pouvoir sous la direction de M. Mike Harris—qu'ils ont introduit un projet de loi qui a interdit aux individus, les sans-abri de nos communautés et autres, comme on voit au bout de la rue Yonge ou sur le Gardiner, d'arrêter les autos quand elles étaient à un stop et de demander de l'argent à ces individus-là quand ils passaient avec leurs autos.

Le gouvernement a dit, « Mon Dieu, regarde ça. On a tous ces sans-abri. Que faire? Ils sont en train d'achaler le public. » Comme vous le savez, le gouvernement, à la place de mettre en place des programmes pour aider les sans-abri qui pourraient, supposons, avoir des problèmes d'alcool, des déficiences mentales ou d'autres problèmes, à la place de mettre des programmes en place pour assister ce monde-là à ne pas être sur les rues, des programmes qui pouvaient les supporter, on disait, « On va arranger le problème en faisant contre la loi l'habilité de ce monde-là de quêter auprès des individus qui passent avec leurs autos sur les rues de l'Ontario. »

Moi, j'ai pensé dans le temps, et je pense que les libéraux ont pensé dans le temps, que ça, c'est un mal. Le gouvernement aurait dû plutôt trouver une réponse au problème et regarder comment on peut rectifier le problème en s'assurant qu'on est capable d'aider les personnes sans abri à trouver un emploi, que les prévenir de quêter. Après tout, moi, j'ai pensé, « Imaginez-vous qu'un gouvernement conservateur qui croit à l'idéologie de ce qu'on appelle le marché ouvert et l'entreprise privée n'alloue pas à un individu lui-même l'habilité de faire sa vie à quêter. » C'est une forme, je pense, des plus naturelles et des plus directes qu'on voit sous le système d'entreprise privée. Je trouvais très intéressant qu'un gouvernement conservateur avait passé une loi contre.

Mais l'effet de cette loi a dit que, si les pompiers à Hearst ou à Kapuskasing ou à Timmins décident qu'ils veulent faire un prélèvement de fonds pour assister une organisation ou une autre dans notre comté, les pompiers n'ont pas le droit, comme ils font parfois, de mettre en place ce qu'on appelle des « roadblocks » pour être capable d'arrêter le trafic et leur rappeler, « Eh, on est en train de soulever l'argent important pour les groupes à but non lucratif dans nos communautés. » La loi a eu l'effet de rendre contre la loi l'habilité de ces organ-

isations d'arrêter les autos sur les routes municipales afin d'assister avec le prélèvement de fonds. M. Lalonde, à travers son projet de loi, essaie d'une manière concrète de réparer le problème qui était créé par le gouvernement conservateur quand ils ont introduit ce projet de loi.

1020

Je veux dire droit au début du débat que nous, les néo-démocrates, allons supporter ce projet de loi. On pense que c'est bon. Je sais que M. Lalonde aurait pu se pencher sur la question, « Est-ce qu'on a besoin d'une telle loi en premier lieu? » « Est-ce qu'on doit arrêter les sans-abri? » Moi, je dis non. À la fin de la journée, la pauvreté, ce n'est pas quelque chose qu'on peut balayer sous le tapis en disant, « Écoute. Ce n'est pas bon qu'ils viennent quêter, puis on va rendre ça contre la loi. » Je pense que c'est une manière pour nous autres de mesurer jusqu'à quel point notre État est en train de répondre aux fléaux de notre société et que, si on voit des sans-abri sur nos rues en train de quêter, ça veut dire possiblement que nous avons un problème avec nos programmes sociaux et que ce qu'on a besoin de faire, c'est de répondre au problème en nous assurant qu'on prend des pas concrets pour assister ce monde.

On sait que, quand on se promène sur Bay, sur Yonge et autres rues à travers les cités de l'Ontario et nos villes, on va voir des sans-abri. Mais la plupart de ces sans-abris, comme on le sait, sont du monde qui ont été renvoyés d'institutions mentales, qui n'ont pas de traitement, qui sont schizophrènes, qui sont déprimés mentalement ou qui ont un problème des fois même physique, et qui n'ont pas l'assistance du gouvernement fédéral ou provincial. Ils n'ont aucun choix, autre qu'aller faire du quêtage sur les rues. Autrement, c'est qu'une personne a un problème avec l'alcool ou avec les drogues.

Ce n'est pas que nous, le gouvernement provincial, devons prendre l'approche, « Écoute. On va aider ceux qui ont des problèmes avec les drogues et avec l'alcool », mais il faut réaliser que c'est une maladie, et pour traiter les effets de ces maladies, il est mieux de nous assurer qu'on a des programmes pour les assister.

Je crois que le pas qu'on manque dans ce projet de loi, et on pourrait possiblement en parler une fois qu'il arrive au comité, c'est qu'on doit éliminer entièrement la loi que le gouvernement conservateur avait mis en place et regarder comment on peut assister les sans-abri qui se trouvent sur nos rues.

Je veux aussi prendre l'opportunité, monsieur Lalonde, de vous introduire à des amis qui sont ici aujourd'hui. On a des étudiants de Hearst directement en arrière de moi, la belle communauté de Hearst, communauté francophone à 99 %. Ils sont ici aujourd'hui avec nous autres de l'École Saint-Louis, et si vous avez une chance tout à l'heure, 10 h 30, monsieur Lalonde, moi, je vais être en bas avec ce groupe, puis si vous voulez venir dire « Allô », cela serait très apprécié.

I want to take an opportunity to take a stab at my Conservative friends.

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): Oh, be quiet.

Mr Bisson: I have to. I'm sorry, Garfield; I must. I noticed you weren't listening to the translation, so I have to say this in English at this point, so you know where I'm coming from.

Mr Dunlop: You're wearing your blue shirt.

Mr Bisson: I've got my blue shirt and my blue tie, but it's not to appease you, I guarantee it, Garfield.

Mr Speaker, through you to the Conservative caucus, I want to remind them that way back—

Mr Dunlop: We have some Conservative kids up here too.

Mr Bisson: Some Conservative kids there? I can't believe that children are Conservatives. They say they are born as New Democrats and when they become cynical and old they become Conservatives. That's what I understand.

Mr Speaker, you'll remember it wasn't that long ago—because you were here, as I was—that we had a debate in this House by the former Conservative government. I believe Mike Harris was the Premier. The government said, "We are having problems with too many people on the street begging and stopping cars at the bottom of Yonge Street and on other streets across the province of Ontario. To fix that, we're going to make it illegal for people to go stick out their hand and stop a car as it comes around the corner on to Yonge Street off Lakeshore or wherever it might be."

I remember thinking at the time, "My God, what a dumb response to a social problem." The problem is that we have people on the street. Why? Because we've depopulated our mental institutions. We have people on the streets that are schizophrenics, people that are depressed, people with all kinds of different problems, which is why they end up on the streets in the first place. Or they are sick from alcohol or drugs. It seemed to me that people on the streets begging was a symptom of a problem in our society, and that government should take the position of saying, "If there's a problem, do we think we have a responsibility?" I understand the Conservatives. One thing that I understand about Conservatives is where they're coming from. They tend to believe that, no, that is an individual problem—

Mr Dunlop: Right, we keep a promise.

Mr Bisson: Well, you do keep your promises. I won't argue about that. I would argue that some of those promises were kind of stupid, but that's another story.

I want to say to my Conservative friends that I understood where your government came from. In many of those issues, Conservatives don't believe that there's a societal responsibility to respond to those social problems. I understand that. But on the other hand, I'm not saying—

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): Get real. Don't stereotype us.

Mr Bisson: Mr Tascona, I want to be very nice to you and just point something out to you.

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: Well, listen, I didn't think it was very political when you guys were doing what you were doing.

But my point here is this: You guys have a particular ideological belief. The belief was that, at the end of the day, the government doesn't have a social responsibility when it comes to certain issues. I understand that, but I think you were wrong. I think that if you see people on the streets, it's a signal that there's a problem within our institutions and there's a problem about how we respond.

There are two approaches, in my view. One is the approach that your government took, which is that you deal with this by trying to take it off the streets, by making it illegal for people to beg on the corners.

There is an opposite view, a view that all my colleagues in the New Democratic Party share, and that is that we do have a societal responsibility, and it's not by sweeping it off the streets by making it illegal to beg that we're going to be in a position to deal with what the problem is. I just want to say, let's recognize where we are.

Now Mr Lalonde comes with his bill, and in this bill he's saying, "I'm going to deal with the aspect around those charities or organizations out there that were trying to fundraise" by what we call roadblocks. For example, you'll know that in your communities, firefighters and others for a long time have gone out and set up roadblocks to stop cars to fundraise for local communities.

Now, there's a bit of an argument. In some communities, they've continued to do that and municipal police forces actually have not charged the fire department or other organizations. For example, about two weeks ago I was driving down Algonquin Boulevard and a bunch of kids from the school were waving and stopping cars to pull into a particular parking lot to wash cars for \$5 for a fundraiser they were doing for their school, actually for one of these school trips we see coming down today.

Municipal police forces, as I understand it, didn't really look at the law from that perspective in some communities. But Mr Lalonde is attempting to resolve the issue by making it clear, by saying there shall be no sanction against a charitable organization that is out there trying to fundraise by way of stopping people as they come in off the streets and doing what they've got to do. I understand that.

I want to make this point: I will vote for this bill, because I think it's the right thing, but I think we do need to send it to committee. There are two things that we've got to look at. The first thing is—

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: That's where I'm going. The first thing is that we need to take a look at whether this bill goes as far as it should. I remember the Liberals voting with me, as a New Democrat, in opposition to the Safe Streets Act when the Tories brought it in. I have to ask myself the question, why does the bill not repeal the entire act? I would like Mr Lalonde to respond to that issue when he gets an opportunity to respond in debate. That's the first thing I want to hear from Mr Lalonde, and it's an issue I think we've got to deal with in committee.

The other issue we've got to take a look at—I don't know if we can actually deal with it through this bill—is,

what is the responsibility of the state when it comes to this issue? If we're going to take a position that, no, it should not be illegal for somebody to beg—I believe we shouldn't make it illegal to beg—what kind of recommendations do we want to make? I realize that's not the purview of your bill, but I think it would be interesting for the committee to spend a bit of time on this. What do we do with those people who find themselves in the situation of being on the street? I believe that the majority of people on the street are not there because they're lazy and just want nothing to do other than beg. Many of them are sick. That's why they end up on the streets. What is our response to that particular issue?

I want to say, as I said upfront, that I will support the bill. It certainly makes a good step forward in trying to deal with this issue. I would like to hear from Mr Lalonde why he did not do an entire repeal of the Safe Streets Act. I imagine there's a reason, and I look forward to that response.

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to welcome St Peter's School from my beautiful riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka, the grade 8 class of Christine Duncan, who are in the west public gallery.

The Deputy Speaker: That's not a point of order, but we welcome them nevertheless.

Further debate?

Mr Dunlop: I'm very pleased to rise today. I'd like to welcome this class as well. They're in my neighbouring riding. Of course, Parry Sound-Muskoka is the second-nicest riding in Ontario, because I think Simcoe North is the nicest riding, with Lake Simcoe, Lake Couchiching and all those sorts of things. We're very proud of our part of the province, and it is great to see so many school classes coming down to Queen's Park to visit.

1030

I want to say from the beginning that I will be supporting Mr Lalonde's bill. First of all, I would be very much opposed to what the member from Timmins-James Bay mentioned when he talked about repealing the whole act. I think it's a valuable act, and as a member of the government that brought that legislation in, I think it works and works well. But there is this particular area of concern around some of the volunteer organizations.

I think what's fair about the bill—and I will just read the explanatory note. I wasn't here for Mr Lalonde's introductory remarks. "The bill amends the Safe Streets Act, 1999 to provide that the prohibition in subsection 3(2) of the act does not apply to fundraising activities that are conducted by registered charities or that are conducted by non-profit organizations on roadways where the speed limit is not more than 50 kilometres per hour." I think that's a very fair area to work with.

No question, the groups we're probably most concerned about are our volunteer firefighter organizations throughout the province. Volunteer firefighters, as we know, have become a very controversial subject, with the two-hatters, as well as this piece of legislation. In my riding, there are the six townships, the city, two towns—

Midland and Penetanguishene—and we have two First Nations volunteer fire departments as well, so we're talking 11 or 12 volunteer fire departments. There are some professional firefighters in there as well. The bottom line is that they raise a lot of money for their communities. I live in the township of Severn, and I can tell you that when the muscular dystrophy fundraising campaign is on, our guys are all out there. I feel a little guilty that they're actually breaking the law if they're on the street. Surely there's a way we can work around that with a piece of legislation. I know we talked about that in the previous government. It was always a discussion at our caucus meetings about why this wasn't really legal or whatever as we looked at amending the legislation.

Now it's been brought up again, and I'm one person in this House who would support some kind of movement in that direction. In our government it was the Attorney General at the time, Jim Flaherty, who brought in the legislation. I don't know if you've had a chance to review this with the new Attorney General, Mr Bryant, or if he's had an opportunity to make amendments to this legislation. But I think it's important that we do, primarily because I think the volunteer organizations are under enough stress as it is. Any roadblock they find in their fundraising activities will hurt other organizations as well. Based on that, we have to take a serious look at it.

The member for Timmins-James Bay brought up the point that the only people out on the streets begging are people with mental—

Mr Bisson: Not all, but a big part of them.

Mr Dunlop: My understanding as you were talking and commenting in your discussion—I picked up that you thought it was mainly a mental health issue as to why people were out there. But we do still see the odd, what I would call, squeegee kid. We still see them out there in the odd community, certainly around the GTA and downtown, but we don't see the numbers we saw previously. I can tell you of cases and examples that came to me where these were full-time jobs for people. People actually came from the suburbs to act as squeegee kids downtown and raised a lot of money; they were paid in cash, of course, and who knows if they declared that cash? I'm not so sure they were all people who had mental health disorders.

Overall, the bill works well. Mr Lalonde has introduced in the past—although we're on different sides of the House and don't agree on policy in a lot of areas, the one thing we would have to agree on more than anything is that Mr Lalonde has brought some pretty important pieces of legislation through this House. One is his francophone flag bill, with the Ontario emblem and the Quebec—the francophone emblem on it as well.

Mr Lalonde: Francophone, not Quebec.

Mr Dunlop: OK. The green-and-white flag bill is how I'll just refer to it. That was an important bill. A number of communities in my riding actually have that flag. Communities like Lafontaine, Perkinsfield and the town of Penetanguishene fly that flag on different occasions, and I know they're very proud of that. It's thanks to Jean-Marc that that actually happened.

Overall, I think this bill will work well for the province. I hope we can make the amendments fairly simply without actually repealing the whole bill. I don't think that would be the right move. Again, it's a bill that our government was very proud of. We think it works and look forward to seeing how far we can actually make this bill work.

One of the things we see in private members' business is a lot of very interesting legislation coming forward. It is unfortunate that more of it doesn't get put through and passed into law, but it's all part of the House leaders' agenda, all part of the strategy that the government has to work with to pass legislation. Maybe as we look toward democratic renewal, Mr Bryant, in his legislation, will allow a lot more private members' business to proceed in a timely manner.

With that, I'm going to turn it over to my colleague, who will finish up for our caucus. Mr Tascona loves to debate on Thursday mornings in private members' hour, and I want to make sure he has lots of time on this particular bill.

Ms Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome the students from Mapleridge Senior Public School. The grade 8 class, with Mr Jeff Cox, is visiting from Powassan today. We're very excited to have them with us today.

The Deputy Speaker: That's not a point of order, but we welcome the students, obviously.

Mr Phil McNeely (Ottawa-Orléans): I'm pleased that the member for Glengarry-Prescott-Russell has brought forward this private member's bill, Bill 58, An Act to amend the Safe Streets Act, 1999 and the Highway Traffic Act to recognize the fund-raising activities of legitimate charities and non-profit organizations.

When this bill came in, the Flaherty homeless and mental health policy bill, it impacted a lot of firemen in Cumberland, in the area where I live. The firemen in Cumberland had been raising money for muscular dystrophy probably going back 20 or 30 years. I know in the province this has in fact gone on for 50 years. It impacted them a lot because they wanted to help out in this very, very significant cause.

Everyone knew that the homeless and the squeegee kids were taking over this province, and the bill was necessary—necessary to clean up our streets so that well-heeled citizens would not have to see the results of Tory social policies. This was probably the most progressive piece of social policy that members on the other side brought forward or that they could have ever dreamed of.

In Cumberland, Terry Morrow, Ivan Tanner, Phil Muggleton, Phil McWha, Kevin Rockcliffe, Jeff Marier, Scott McLachlan and Don McNeely, my nephew, all had been chairmen of fundraising for Muscular Dystrophy Canada and had been very successful at it. They raised from \$12,000 to \$20,000 per year. These are the same firefighters who are very much part of our communities. We are very proud of them.

We're dealing with this bill today that would permit charities like the MDC drive to let firemen take up this

fundraising again, and it's not too late. There's been a critical loss in funds raised across the province by the firemen. Some of them have gone to back alleys and parking lots, but it's not the same. What we're asking today in this bill is that we support the fireman's boot asking for a donation.

This legislation was brought in to hide the impact of the Tory social legislation, but at the same time it gave the boot to the fundraising of the MDC. Attempts by MDC to have this law changed have not been successful, although I understand, Mr Speaker, that you have done a lot of work in this way.

1040

Roadways, according to the Solicitor General in the year 2000, were not places to be used for solicitation. This gave the boot to the firefighters' fundraising. They retrenched, but they have not been as successful.

The firefighters of Ontario have offered their support to find a route to amend the Safe Streets Act. The Conservative government had the opportunity to change this bill, but refused. We have the opportunity now, in this private member's bill, to do so.

I read from something I received from Muscular Dystrophy Canada just yesterday:

"The reality is that over \$200,000 has been lost over the past three years, and it is estimated that tens of thousands of dollars will continue to be at stake in future development opportunities. This greatly restricts available funding to 11,374 Canadians living with neuromuscular disorders serviced by MDC that are in vital need of equipment and education programs (to assist them in their daily lives). Additionally, it limits the opportunities to researchers who continue their quest for the cause, treatments and cures for over 100 neuromuscular disorders."

Today, if this private member's bill passes, we will be able to assist the good-natured, benevolent, energetic and competent firefighters who want to raise money for muscular dystrophy. This is important. This is a charitable effort that they do very well. They do it on streets that are not busy. I know that near my home I always got caught—I used to say get "caught"—by the stop at Dunning Road and Old Montreal Road. It was a stop street. It was busy enough to collect funds, but certainly it was done very safely.

The MDC, in terms of their fundraising, suggest, "If you have difficulties getting approval, discuss other ways of fundraising for MDC with your district coordinator." That's where they are at with this present legislation. "We have had some success in reversing decisions due to continued efforts of firefighters presenting their cases to municipalities, proving Bill 8 is difficult to interpret for councils and law enforcement bodies.

"Ask all firefighters to send letters to their local MPP stating Bill 8 is a concern. It is important to send it to your own MPP as constituents, for it has more impact!" That's what they're doing. They're trying to help the firefighters get back into the business.

"As constituents," they suggest, "present a petition to your local MPP." But I think it would be much more proactive for all of us on all sides of this House to support this bill and make sure we help the firemen to help those in such need.

I say, let's get on with this change in the legislation by approving wholeheartedly this private member's bill.

The last line on the publication MDC gave me was, "Please help MDC to effect change to allow firefighters to continue the fight against neuromuscular disorders!"

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate? The member from Dundas—

Mr Jim Brownell (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): Stormont.

The Deputy Speaker: Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh.

Mr Brownell: Thank you, Mr Speaker. It is a mouthful, but certainly we're proud of Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh and the fire departments who work so hard in those communities in the riding.

It gives me great pleasure this morning to stand in support of my good colleague from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell in his efforts with Bill 58, an amendment to the safe streets statute law.

Every year, it almost seems like a rite of spring to see the fire departments in my riding, especially in my home community of Long Sault, out on Moulinette Road, the street I live on, with smiles on their faces working for Jerry's kids.

We know that in that Labour Day campaign millions of dollars are raised to support muscular dystrophy, and the firemen of this province are indeed proud of the work they do. Their boot drive is a most fundamental and necessary project that they've taken on for many, many years. If memory serves me right, for 50 years we've had communities working to aid programs such as muscular dystrophy and whatnot in similar drives. I know that, in my community of south Stormont and at Long Sault, I can't count the number of years the firefighters have been out raising these necessary funds.

The bill that's before us today is not a new bill. We saw in this province, and certainly Parliaments before us saw, that charities were bothered. I think it was in Niagara that my good colleague from Niagara Centre saw it in his riding. He saw that in their work on muscular dystrophy firefighters were bothered. The words of an Attorney General that charities would not be bothered and that they would still be able to carry on their activities were false.

We saw something happen here in the province. We saw that it was necessary for somebody to lobby and to work here in the House to get something done. We had bills put forward: Bill 64 in April 2000; Bill 26 in April 2001; and then the third party introduced Bill 51, also in April 2000, to do the very thing my good friend from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell is doing, bringing this forward to amend it and to allow those who wish to aid those charities in Ontario to use roadways.

It's spelled out here that roadways that have limits of under 50 kilometres per hour established may be used for those charities to raise the necessary funds. I certainly give it full support. We have seen in our communities that firefighters are not pushing their cause. They stand there with smiles on their faces. It is well advertised. They advertise in the newspapers before and even out on the roadways. They advertise what they are doing, and they do not do pushy solicitation on the street. They allow you to drive up and make the donation at your will.

I continue to support the work. I do not think our law enforcement should be put in the predicament of having to choose which law they want to enforce. Therefore, I think we should amend this bill so that we can support the charities that support the people of our province.

Mr Tascona: I'm pleased to join in the debate with respect to the amendment to the Safe Streets Act, 1999, and the Highway Traffic Act. Certainly what is being proposed by the member is worthy of review by the Legislature. When it was introduced in 1999, there were concerns. A review now, in 2004, is warranted with respect to what is going on.

I have just one comment to make with respect to the language that is in here. I find it a little confusing and I don't think the intent is to make it confusing. It says:

"(3) Subsection (2) does not apply to fund-raising activities that meet the following conditions.

"1. They are conducted by a charitable organization recognized by Revenue Canada."

That's simple enough, but then it goes on to say:

"2. They are conducted by a non-profit organization on a roadway"—and that's where it's qualified—"where the maximum speed limit is 50 kilometres per hour."

I would think, and my friend may know better, that a charitable organization recognized by Revenue Canada would also be a non-profit organization. Maybe it's not, but maybe what he is trying to accomplish is to have two different types of organizations, one where it's a charitable organization recognized by Revenue Canada, and also a non-profit organization. If that's the case, then I would recommend that he put that in number 1 so it's clear that he is covering both types of organizations. Then number 2 can still be where these activities are conducted "on a roadway where the maximum speed limit is 50 kilometres per hour."

1050

There are three conditions here. I think the first condition should be clear enough so that it recognizes charitable organizations recognized by Revenue Canada and/or non-profit organizations. Leave number 2 to be the speed limit where these organizations can do their activities, so that it's very clear. One could argue that charitable organizations recognized by Revenue Canada can do it wherever they wish and at whatever speed limit. I don't think that's really the intent, so there's the caveat with respect to what's permitted by the municipal bylaws.

I offer those as constructive comments, in terms of making it very clear who is going to be able to do these

fundraising activities and which charity organizations they are. I think it's very important to be able to do that.

Also, looking at the activities that can be conducted and the different organizations mentioned, there are lots of organizations that get out there. Every fall you see Georgian College students in my riding looking to do activities that raise money for the cause they're supporting. The firefighters in my community are always out there doing charitable work, along with the work that the police association is doing, as well as a number of other organizations that decide to do their fundraising, whether it's in an enclosed building or on a roadway.

What we have here is a lot of information. I think the member is correct to bring this back for review. The organizations want to be considered in that regard, in terms of being able to do their activities without being put in a position—I don't know whether the member has looked at this, but it says, "They are permitted by a bylaw of the municipality." I don't know what research he's done, what particular municipalities do with respect to this type of activity, whether it's permitted or not.

If it's permitted, then what conditions are it permitted under? That's what is essentially important, what conditions they are permitted under. It may be that we put this in place, but the bylaw of the municipality will not allow it. I don't know whether that applies to any municipality. I really wouldn't know. That's something he may want to do some research on. He may not want that to stand as a condition if it causes some problems. At the end of the day, these organizations may end up having to go to the municipality to allow their activities to go ahead.

We can perhaps assume that there isn't going to be an issue, but obviously by putting that as a condition there may be an issue with respect to a municipal bylaw. I guess that will be the condition that may not allow this particular activity to happen. What's going on here is that the municipality may have the final say. Maybe that's correct. Maybe they should have the final say in terms of what activities they're going to allow on their roadways.

I guess it depends on the community in terms of what the speed limit is, but he's put a speed limit of 50 kilometres per hour. I guess it depends how different municipalities deal with that. Some municipalities might have 60 kilometres per hour, so obviously that would be permissible in terms of what they could drive at. Others may be at 30 kilometres per hour. Those roads would have to be identified.

So there are some issues here in terms of making sure that the member is working with different municipalities. Maybe they could be put on notice that this is what's going to be happening. They may want to comment if this goes to public hearings in terms of what the municipal sector would view as fair, and one that wouldn't do the same thing for these kinds of activities.

When you talk about a non-profit organization, there may also be the qualifier that it's a non-profit organization that is incorporated under the Business Corporations Act of Ontario or the federal legislation. You may

want to specify that. I don't think you really intend this to apply to a private club. Maybe you do. But non-profit organizations, even social clubs, generally are incorporated in that regard. That may be something you want to look at in terms of which non-profit organizations you want to be there, whether it is a private club or ones that are incorporated. That is another thing that I would offer constructive observations on in terms of making sure that everybody understands who qualifies for this and what activities can be done and where those activities can be done.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate? I'm not sure if there's—

Mr Bisson: There is.

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): Two minutes.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes. Further debate, the member for Beaches-East York.

Mr Prue: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I was advised there were a couple minutes left.

I will be supporting this bill, but I have to tell you at the outset that this bill was made necessary because of the Safe Streets Act, 1999. When it was passed, it was an act that in effect became a sledgehammer. It was decided that we had to stop the squeegee kids and the panhandlers from getting money on the streets and darting in and out between cars and asking for that kind of stuff. But the reality is, it didn't stop the squeegee kids. Who it stopped, in the end, were the firefighters and the charities. The original act was a useless act, and now we are here today trying to amend a useless act to help the very people we never intended to harm in the first place. That's the reality.

There I was, a city of Toronto councillor in those days. We watched from afar as this Legislature debated it. Very much was said in this Legislature about how this was going to protect the drivers, the motorists and the general public, that it was a safety issue because the squeegee kids and the panhandlers, whoever, were out in the roadway and the traffic were somehow going to come to harm. I'm sure that was meant all well and good, but the reality is that I don't believe any of them were ever harmed in any meaningful way. Nor do I believe that any people working for the fire departments or anyone else are going to be harmed by the enactment of this law. That was a bogus statement made back in 1999. I think it was launched because there was public anger at begging on the streets.

The reality, though, is that we have to help the charities. Short of getting rid of the original bad law, which would solve it all, I guess this is the next best thing we can do, and therefore I will be supporting Mr Lalonde's bill to do exactly that. I commend him for putting it forward. I know he had another bill in mind today but went with this one. It is a thoughtful idea. It is an idea whose time has come. And perhaps the Legislature can start thinking about not having to have bills like this but getting rid of the original problem rather than putting a Band-Aid on it.

The Speaker: Mr Lalonde has two minutes to reply.

Mr Lalonde: I would like to thank all those members who spoke in favour of the bill: the members from Peterborough, Timmins-James Bay, Simcoe North—and I would just like to clarify for the member for Simcoe North, who referred to my previous bill, which has passed third reading, that the fleur-de-lys that appears on the francophone community flag is not a Quebec emblem but a worldwide francophone emblem—and also the members for Ottawa-Orléans, Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh, Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford and Beaches-East York.

I'd just like to bring to the attention of the member from Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford that, yes, section 2 of this bill amends subsection 177(3), which was amended by Bill 8. There are three reasons. First of all, you could be officially recognized by Revenue Canada as a non-profit organization, but you could also have a non-profit organization that is not officially recognized by Revenue Canada because the organization does not have the money to have its charter approved by Revenue Canada. Just this past weekend, an Optimist Club from St Isidore, Ontario, applied for a liquor licence for the 125th anniversary. The official Optimist International has a charter, but the local organization, which is known as a non-profit organization, did not have a charter. We have the Catholic Women's League, the Kiwanis Club and the Kinsmen Club that really are not locally recognized by Revenue Canada, but they are definitely non-profit organizations.

So there are only two sections. I do believe in Bill 8. I do believe in the Safe Streets Act.

1100

FIRST NATIONS RESOURCE REVENUE SHARING ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 SUR LE PARTAGE AVEC LES PREMIÈRES NATIONS DES RECETTES TIRÉES DE L'EXPLOITATION DES RESSOURCES

Mr Bisson moved second reading of the following bill:
Bill 97, An Act respecting the sharing of resource revenues for First Nations / Projet de loi 97, Loi concernant le partage avec les Premières nations des recettes tirées de l'exploitation des ressources.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Mr Bisson has moved second reading of Bill 97, An Act respecting the sharing of resource revenues for First Nations. Pursuant to standing order 96, you now have 10 minutes to lead off.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): First of all, I want, through this debate, in the 10 minutes I have, to point out to members exactly what this bill does.

First of all, the problem: What currently exists and has existed in Ontario and across Canada for years is an inequity that is beyond belief, quite frankly, in a civilized society like ours. If, for example, in the communities of Sudbury, Kenora, Timmins or wherever it might be, you

were to find and try to develop a mine within the boundaries of the municipalities, and even outside the boundaries, there is a mechanism for those municipalities to exact municipal assessment, a tax, to collect revenue from that project, be it a mine, a lumber mill, a car plant or whatever, so they are able to get money to pay for such things as roads, water-sewer, arena projects, the projects that are important to sustain the community's basic infrastructure.

All members of this assembly will know that even though we're always looking for more for our communities, non-aboriginal communities, cities like Timmins and others, do fairly well. We have very well established infrastructure that allows our communities to function: so our kids have a place to go, we have arenas and swimming pools; and to make sure our cars have a place to drive and we don't bust an axle every time we go down the road, we have paved roads. In First Nations communities, that's not the case. If you go into communities like Ogoki, where my good friend Mr Prue was with me about two or three weeks ago, that community has no paved roads. I don't have a community, one single First Nations community, one reserve in the riding I represent, that has any paved roads.

And in most communities you can't drink the water. Water plants were put in place; unfortunately, the federal government doesn't provide money for training and the maintenance of the water plants so we have the funding we need to make them operate. Some are better than others, but we still have a problem.

In many cases, the sewer systems are not adequate to build the expanded housing needed in those communities. For example, in Attawapiskat, if you want to do an expansion of new housing, desperately needed in that community, one of the things that's holding up the building of houses beyond federal funding is the issue that the water and sewer systems are not strong enough. Well, the water is, but the sewer system is inadequate and has not been expanded in such a way that we can deal with the needs of the community to expand.

So what we've now got are First Nations communities that are truly without even some of the basic services that we take for granted in our communities. What's exacerbating the situation is that the federal government never really transfers the amount of money those communities need to deal with their needs. But what's really frustrating is that you see a company like De Beers, which is coming up to start up a diamond mine near Attawapiskat, and it's estimated that the construction portion of that project alone—get a load of this—is \$700 million, but there is absolutely no mechanism for the First Nations community, by law, to make sure they get some kind of assessment from that project when it is up and running. That mine will be operating for at least 15 years. You have to believe it's going to make more than \$700 million because they're spending \$700 million to build a mine.

Now, in fairness to De Beers and Attawapiskat, they have gone through a very difficult process of negotiations

over the last four or five years to put in place a revenue-sharing agreement between the Attawapiskat First Nation and the De Beers mine, and it's just about to be finalized. But the point is this: Why should every community, every time there is a development to go on, have to go cap in hand to the mining company or the forestry company, be it what it is, to negotiate what should be a right? If you open a diamond mine in and about Timmins, the city of Timmins knows what to do. De Beers would know what to do. They would pay municipal assessment to the municipality.

If the mine was opened outside of our municipality, I know what my municipal council would do: We'd annex it. We'd do an expansion of the city of Timmins, as we did when Kidd Creek Mines, which is now the largest employer in Timmins, was started up. Because it fell outside of municipal boundaries, the city of Timmins said, "We're going to expand the municipal boundaries so they're in our city." That was a pretty smart thing to do. As a result of that, we have money from those mines to be able to build things like the Archie Dillon Sportsplex and many other projects that the city has built since Kidd Creek opened operations in Timmins.

So what Bill 97 tries to do is simply this. I don't presume to pretend to know what a revenue-sharing agreement should contain. Nobody in this House, I think, can do that at this point. I don't pretend to know that even First Nations communities clearly understand what should be inside a revenue-sharing agreement. I don't pretend to know that government or industry knows. All I'm asking for in this bill is a very simple process: that 90 days after this bill is passed, there is a direction given to the government of Ontario, over a three-year period, to sit down with First Nations communities and the mining and forestry companies to work out what a revenue-sharing agreement should look like for all projects that are developed up in northern Ontario that would be affected by this bill.

At the end of the day, we may decide it doesn't make sense to have municipal assessments for First Nations, for whatever reason. Maybe what we do is deal with some form of provincial tax that is directly transferred back to the community. Maybe there's another mechanism that we haven't thought of. But the point is, let's start the process.

I'm hoping that if members vote for this particular bill, what it's going to do is create a table that First Nations can come to, along with the mining companies and the government, to sit down and figure out where we go forward. Why is this good? It's obviously good for First Nations, because it means, for example, De Beers or Attawapiskat would not have had to go through what they've gone through in the last five or six years when it comes to negotiating a revenue-sharing agreement.

But, I will argue to members of this assembly, it's a good thing for mining companies and a great thing for forestry companies. As I sit and talk to mining operators and others, they want to know what the rules are. One of the impediments for development north of 50 is that we

don't know what the rules are. It's not the government's fault. You didn't create this problem. It's a problem that's existed there for years. What this does, if at the end of this we get a process of developing what revenue-sharing is, is say to mining companies that when they want to go develop a mine around Constance Lake or around Attawapiskat, Fort Albany, Great Bear Lake, Ogoki—whatever it might be—they'll know what the rules are.

You know what? They open mines all the time in places like Timmins, because they know what the rules are. They know they've got to pay municipal assessment to the city. All the mine does, like Placer Dome, is say, "Is this an economically viable project?" They look at the cost of developing the property. They look at the strength and size of the ore body and how rich it is. They look at all costs associated with operating, including paying municipal taxes. Then they put that in a bottle and say, "We have or we don't have an economic project."

All I want is the same for First Nations. It is unacceptable that in this day and age we, the province, who control natural resources, don't have a mechanism. It's our responsibility. It's not the federal government's. The federal government does not run natural resources; we do, as a province. So if it's our responsibility to organize and manage natural resources in the province of Ontario, it's then incumbent upon us to find a mechanism to allow First Nations to share in the wealth of those projects that will be developed.

It would go a long way. It would not only mean that First Nations would have some money to build badly needed infrastructure, but it would allow First Nations to start looking at how to deal with other issues. We all talk about wanting to break the cycle of dependency. You know what? There's not a person in Attawapiskat, Ogoki or Great Bear Lake that wouldn't love to have a situation where we didn't have welfare, where people actually had jobs, went to work and made money.

But in those communities there is no option. Some people would say, "Oh, well, just get on the plane"—because there are no roads—"and fly all the way down to Timmins or Thunder Bay and find a job." Well, if you grow up in Attawapiskat or any other community, you may not want to come. Imagine if I were to say to my good friend Mr McNeely, who lives, I believe, in Ottawa, "Well, I say to you that if there's no work in Ottawa, then too bad. Pack up your bags, shut down the town and move to Toronto." People wouldn't like that. Why should we do that to First Nations?

1110

If we're going to break the dependency, we have to build the tools to allow that to happen, and one of the tools they need is a mechanism to revenue-share when projects happen in their area. The other thing it will do is put First Nations in the position of saying, "We want development," because it's going to mean money for them and jobs for their people. What we need to do is find some way to make First Nations a front-line player when it comes to developing resources in northern On-

tario, when it comes to mining, forestry, mushroom farms or whatever it might be. And at the end of the day, whatever revenue-sharing looks like, it shouldn't be presumed to be created by me—I don't have the exact answer; I have some good ideas—but it should be given to that table of industry, First Nations and government to deal with.

The other thing is—I sent an invitation—that we should refer this bill to a standing committee and we should travel to northern communities this summer, four or five of them. Go to Attawapiskat, members of the assembly. You'll be fascinated when you get there: wonderful people but desperate conditions. Let's go to Great Bear Lake. Let's go to some of the reserves in northern Ontario and a couple of communities like Timmins and others that are affected by this, so we can hear from both industry and First Nations what they think of this bill and how it could be made better—because I don't pretend to have gotten the draft perfect—so we can then move forward and help First Nations prosper in Ontario.

Mr David Oraziotti (Sault Ste Marie): I'm pleased to rise in the House today. I will be speaking in support of ballot item number 28, Bill 97, An Act respecting the sharing of resource revenues for First Nations. I commend Mr Bisson, the member from Timmins-James Bay, for bringing this bill forward.

I will be sharing my time with the member from Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh, Mr Brownell, and the member from Brant, Mr Levac.

This is an incredibly important issue. I can tell you as a northerner that there are about 172 First Nation communities in this province and about 130 First Nation reservations in northern Ontario. If you travel through First Nation communities and take the time to visit with them, you can see the conditions and the economic despair that exist in many First Nation communities across this province. They are truly not sharing in the wealth and opportunity this province has to offer. I think this bill is a demonstration of a step that will take that action and help First Nation individuals share in the potential revenue and wealth of this province.

Our government is making a commitment to aboriginals and First Nation residents in this province to build a new relationship with them and improve their quality of life. We made good on a commitment to follow through on a public inquiry with respect to the Dudley George case. The handling of that in the past has been a dismal reflection of the provincial government's relationship with aboriginal communities. We've agreed to a proposed land claim settlement with the Rainy River First Nation, signalling a new era in aboriginal relations. We have invested \$166.5 million over five years in the aboriginal healing and wellness strategy that will be directed to a range of programs and services that provide improved health and family healing in aboriginal communities. We've also announced the opening of a native child and family services agency here in Toronto to protect vulnerable aboriginal youth in Toronto.

If you take a look at the quality-of-life indicators that First Nations people experience in this province, whether it's mortality rates, suicide rates, substance abuse rates, teenage pregnancy rates, cancer rates, diabetes rates, they are all exceptionally higher than those of Ontarians who do not live on First Nations reservations. In speaking to First Nations individuals, it is incredibly frustrating as they watch the wealth in their communities leave without the opportunity to share in that wealth and improve their own socio-economic status in this province. So I commend Mr Bisson for bringing this forward.

I also acknowledge that this is not something we will do with respect to First Nations communities in a way that does not include or involve their participation. I certainly support the fact that this needs to go to a committee. It needs to have all of the stakeholders meet together, be present and discuss this particular issue. I also like his suggestion that we take the time to travel to First Nations communities, to involve first-hand the people who live in these communities, gather their input and ascertain what may be the best way to develop a revenue-sharing agreement.

First Nations individuals want to share in the wealth of this province. They want to be part of the growth of this province. They're not able to do that at this time with respect to our treatment of aboriginals and the relationship that our government currently has with First Nations individuals.

I had the pleasure last Saturday morning of speaking to national Chief Phil Fontaine and Anishinabek Chief Earl Commanda, who were in Sault Ste Marie with our Lieutenant Governor, James Bartleman, at the opening of the Shingwauk University Centre of Excellence. The Shingwauk school was a residential school in Sault Ste Marie and is now Algoma University College. This was a major step forward, having the aboriginal community in the Sault Ste Marie area play a tremendous role in supporting their own culture, background and academic opportunities.

If you take a look at the history of this country, it has been shaped in much part by the role and strength of the aboriginal people in this community. It is something that has been forgotten and not included in many of our history textbooks that we use in schools today. The centre that was opened in Sault Ste Marie will allow greater research to take place, and a greater understanding of the involvement that First Nations have had in communities like Sault Ste Marie and, quite frankly, across Ontario.

I'm very pleased to support this bill. Hopefully it will help to develop a very productive relationship with the aboriginal community, improve that relationship and allow them to share in the revenues that will flow from their First Nations.

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): It's my pleasure to join in the debate today on the member for Timmins-James Bay's private member's Bill 97, An Act respecting the sharing of resource revenues for First Nations. If passed, the bill will require the government of

Ontario to develop, in consultation with First Nations and resource companies, a mechanism for ensuring that First Nations share in the revenues from resource extraction projects within their traditional territories in northern Ontario. This mechanism would apply to all resource revenue sharing projects and avoid the costly and complicated individual negotiations process in place now.

First, I would like to say that the overall purpose of this bill is something that is very important. Financial compensation for resources extracted from lands within First Nation territories is an important step toward improving the living conditions of remote communities that rely on this land for their well-being. I agree with this. This is something that has been done in the past. It has been done on an individual basis between resource companies and local First Nations. Any discussion about economic development in the north should involve the role of the First Nations. For too long they've not had a place at the table.

This bill aims at setting up the process that would get us to a mechanism that will be used as a permanent framework for revenue sharing in the north. I believe this to be important. However, I have concerns with the details of the bill, particularly how the term "traditional lands" is defined. The explanatory note says, "A procedure is established by which resource companies that intend to extract natural resources from First Nations traditional lands in northern Ontario will negotiate a comprehensive revenue sharing agreement with the First Nations and the government of Ontario."

Section 1 of the bill defines the term "traditional lands" by stating, "'Traditional lands' means lands that were traditionally travelled across or made use of by a First Nation, whether or not they fall within a reserve occupied by that First Nation." It seems to me that this term is far too vague for the purposes of becoming law. My concern is that there is no clear definition of how far back in history are traditional lands, or how much did the land have to be used to be considered part of traditional First Nation lands?

Out of that question naturally comes, who will decide what is traditional? Will it be the courts? In reality, with this bill it will be as ad hoc as it is now. It will open up the definition each time a new piece of land is used. If this bill concerned designated lands, I would be able to support it. However, given the inevitable questions that will come out of vague definition of "traditional lands," I cannot support this bill.

1120

However, I think we have to be careful not to throw the baby out with the bathwater. We should note that the overall purpose of this bill, which is revenue sharing, is worthwhile. This is something that resource companies and First Nations have realized already. They already engage in resource-sharing agreements. The member for Timmins-James Bay made the comparison of a municipality and municipal tax. I agree with that comparison. As with any tax, you have to be careful that the tax level

is not so high that it's a detriment to doing business and has the opposite effect of what is intended.

I would point out, based on his comparison with a municipality, it has defined borders and it's very clear. If it's the municipality of Timmins, it's very clear where those borders are. That is a real difference with this bill. As the representative for Parry-Sound Muskoka, I would like to point out that he considers northern Ontario as starting at the French River. As you know, the government in its budget last week has made changes to the definition of northern Ontario to take half of my riding out of the north. In fact, I am presenting the balance of 6,000 petitions today from the constituents of Parry Sound-Muskoka who object to that because it's going to negatively affect them. This bill being put forward by the member for Timmins-James Bay completely excludes the seven First Nations within my riding.

I'd like go back to Muskoka being out of the north—part of the budget that was brought down on May 18—because that is going to negatively affect the First Nations in the Muskoka part of my riding. A huge success story in the Moose Deer Point First Nation is the joint venture which has created Niigon industries. Niigon is wholly owned by the First Nation, which provided land, human resources and \$2 million for the project. In its start-up phase, Niigon focused on making small, high-end components for the automotive electronics industry. It now has a 14,000-square-metre facility and it does plastic injection moulding. All of Niigon's profits will go into a band-controlled trust to reinvest in sustainable community projects. That was made possible in large part because Muskoka is, or was, considered part of the north. So there was substantial money from the northern Ontario heritage fund and, in total, I think over \$6 million of Ontario provincial government money went into this project. Now they will be excluded.

The Wahta First Nation has successfully developed a dried cranberry processing plant. That was assisted by the northern Ontario heritage fund. They will no longer be able to access that.

As well, the health concerns of First Nations in the Muskoka part of my riding will be negatively affected because funding for the hospitals in Muskoka, which they use, will decline. Access to some of the specific programs will be denied to those First Nation residents who live in Muskoka. I've noticed that I've been receiving petitions from First Nations people in the Muskoka part of the riding.

This bill that we're talking about today, though, completely ignores the seven First Nations in Parry Sound-Muskoka, including Henvey Inlet First Nation, Shawanaga First Nation, Magnetawan First Nation, Dokis First Nation, Wahta First Nation, Moose Deer Point First Nation and Wasauksing First Nation. Because it ignores my riding, and because of the vague definition of traditional property, traditional territory, I cannot support this bill. I commend the member for bringing forward the bill and I think it has a very worthwhile purpose. I wish him well with it.

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): I rise in support of the bill. I am, I have to say at the outset, a Toronto boy. I have lived my whole life in this city, with the exception of one year in Ottawa. To me, going to First Nations reserves in southern Ontario was always sad. It was sad to see the poverty. It was sad to see people living on traditional lands and in traditional styles and not sharing in the benefits of Canada.

As a young man, I went to the University of Toronto and to Carleton University—hence my one year in Ottawa—and studied anthropology, amongst other things. I was fascinated by native Canadians and their culture, their history and tradition in this country. But in those days, when you studied that, it was to study a people who, sadly, were in decline. The federal Indian Act, as it was then known and called, was an act based on paternalism going back to the 19th and 18th centuries, where the federal government provided all of the resources, spent all of the money, and told native Canadians how they were to live and under what conditions they were to live. Those living conditions resulted in, quite frankly, poverty. They resulted in drug and alcohol dependency, they resulted in abuse, they resulted in family breakdowns, and the whole dismemberment of native culture.

I'm glad to say that over the past 30 years, since those were my study days, I have seen some profound changes, changes for the better. I have seen governments at the federal level and provincial level, particularly in British Columbia and in Quebec, start to treat native Canadians and their communities with respect. I have seen the transfer of funds and programs from the federal level to the provincial level so that native Canadians can be treated the same way under provincial statute as any other person living in those provinces. We have seen the bands, as well, begin to take charge and to change. We have seen a new generation of people with education—doctors and lawyers and dentists and teachers—taking charge of those band councils and leading them in a correct and appropriate direction, taking and seizing control of the daily lives of those bands. Those have all been very good things.

I have to say, since being elected to this House some nearly three years ago now, I have had an opportunity, first of all as the housing critic for the NDP, and latterly housing and Comsoc, among six portfolios of which I'm the critic, to travel with the member from Timmins-James Bay, and into the riding as well of the leader of the third party, to go to some of those reserves and actually see the conditions of the housing and the levels of poverty that continue to exist, the welfare rates and the problems they are having. I have to tell you, it's still sad to see very proud people—it's sad to see Cree nations, it's sad to see Ojibwa nations—in northern Ontario living in circumstances that should no longer exist in our country. It is sad to see housing in states of disrepair, the lack of sewage facilities. It is sad to see people without any real future.

Recently, I had an opportunity to go with the member from Timmins-James Bay to Ogoki, a little town I had

only seen on a map. We went there to talk to Chief Eli and his band council. It's a small community of about 300 or 400 houses. There is absolutely no industry. When we sat with the band council one evening and asked them what they wanted, what they would want to happen in Ogoki, they were united. It was crystal clear: What they wanted were some jobs. What they wanted was for some industry or someone to come into their community and would provide an opportunity for their young people to be educated, to work, to stay in the community and to help those who were living there. And to do that, they required one thing. They thought a road would be a nice idea, that a road could run 90 miles north from where it drops off now in another community and would allow for transportation. The road would bring in jobs. The road could bring in tourists. The road could even allow all of the groceries that they have to bring in by transport plane twice a week to be trucked in, saving them enormous amounts of money.

I would ask the members, if you ever go to these northern communities, to go into the northern store and see how much things cost: \$10 for a bag of potatoes—remember, a lot of these people are on welfare—\$1 for a can of Coke, things that we take for granted. You know, kids might want a bag of potato chips that we would buy for 97 cents in the store; they are \$10 there. A road into some of these communities would be a great asset, so that's what they talked about. They want the jobs; they want the resources; they want their people to stay at home; they want to be able to have communities that stay together.

They want that for a reason. It's not that they are isolationists; it is that they are very proud of who and what they are. They are starting to teach their children the Cree and Ojibwa languages again. They are starting to teach their children that it is good to stay at home and to develop their communities in traditional and non-traditional ways.

1130

I think that's all we can offer and all we should be offering, and that's all that is in this bill. Give them the opportunity to get the money. Give them the opportunity to participate, let them make their own decisions, and see a true flowering of our native people in this country. If this bill can do this, then I am going to support the bill. If there are any flaws about the boundary line, as the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka said, let's take it to committee and change that boundary line, but please do what British Columbia has done, please do what Quebec has done: Recognize these northern communities and these northern people and give them an opportunity to share in the wealth of this province and of this country. This bill will go a long way to do it. It is long past due.

I commend the member from Timmins-James Bay for bringing it forward. He tried unsuccessfully in the last Parliament to bring it forward, but I'm sure there is a better will in this House today on this than there was then.

Native Canadians deserve the right to participate in the richness of this land, particularly in their own traditional

communities. Those traditional communities have to go beyond what is defined in the reserves. There are many communities, and I think the most obvious one is Moose Factory, which do not fall into traditional reserves but are traditional communities all the same.

The member from Timmins-James Bay should be commended for what he is doing. We have an obligation, a right and a duty to make sure that all Ontarians, including those who are native Canadians, share in the wealth of our province.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate? The member for Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh.

Mr Jim Brownell (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): You've got it, Mr Speaker, and you're doing a great job there.

It certainly is a pleasure for me to stand in support of Bill 97, An Act respecting the sharing of resource revenues for First Nations. We certainly heard some eloquent words from the honourable member for Sault Ste Marie and just now from the member for Beaches-East York. He made comments that he is a city boy from Toronto. Well, I'm from the far east; not a city boy, but certainly from the far east, not having the greatest knowledge of the far north. But being asked to speak on this bill has given me a chance to delve into some of the issues of the far north, of the northern region of Ontario.

I'd like to pick up on comments made in some dialogue that the member from Timmins-James Bay sent to all members of the House when he asked for support of this bill. In his last paragraph, he commented about inviting the committee that will study this bill to the north, to those remote First Nations communities in the north, to visit and to understand. Perhaps it's important for all members of this House, not just the committee members studying it, to travel to the north. I think I will take up the invitation of the member from Timmins-James Bay and do a little more exploring. I've always been interested in taking the Polar Bear Express, I believe it's called, as far north as I could get. I'd love to do that. It's always been in the back of my mind, but it's to take the time.

In speaking in support of this bill, I truly believe that those inhabitants, the people who live in those First Nations communities, want to be front-line players in all aspects of community life; here we're talking about natural resources, but in all aspects. Although I've had many chances to dialogue with the First Nations people of Akwesasne in my riding, it was two weeks ago that I had an opportunity of touring the Akwesasne First Nation, and they talked about the economic disparity they have felt through life. They alluded to the fact that in my riding right now there's a study going on to provide for a low suspension bridge across the St Lawrence into Akwesasne. They talked about the revenue that has developed in businesses north of that bridge in the city of Cornwall, the economic corridor in the city. With that high suspension bridge coming down to a low suspension bridge, what they want to see now is that that economic corridor down in their nation continues over the bridge and on to their lands.

That's very much like what's being debated here today, that they benefit from what we have benefited from in our communities.

It's wonderful that the member from Timmins-James Bay is taking the initiative once again to bring this forward, that we have a chance. But I think too that we have to look across Canada and think that what we're doing in Ontario should be done for all First Nations in Canada. I know we have to work with our federal counterparts. We have to work with our communities, aboriginal and non-aboriginal. We have to work together to make sure they get what they rightfully deserve—and that we know they rightfully deserve.

That's why it did not take long for me to agree to stand in this House today and speak in support of this bill. I stand down, but I stand up for the people in our First Nations.

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I'm very pleased to speak on the bill from the member from Timmins-James Bay.

The bill in itself seems straightforward enough, but I guess the issue is with respect to the details. As the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka commented, there are some issues. One of the most fundamental ones is because what's being proposed here is a procedure.

The first point I want to comment on is, there is a procedure for arbitration where there's no agreement reached. As we know, the Attorney General is currently undergoing a process of review of all of the Arbitration Act per se. I would caution the member from Timmins-James Bay that he may want to take that into consideration in terms of his own drafting as to what the Attorney General comes out with with respect to his review. Because the Arbitration Act, for those who are familiar with it, is a fairly simple act. It's not a very long act, but it would appear that the government of the day has some concerns with arbitration itself.

What's being put forward here is essentially an arbitration procedure. Whether this arbitration procedure can contract out of the current Arbitration Act may be well and fine, but if, on review or because of any changes to the Arbitration Act, you find that it will change, then what is being proposed by the member may not be fine.

What we have here is also an issue with respect to the imposition of this agreement. Now the government of Ontario is at the table, along with the First Nations—they're the recognized parties—and any other parties that are mutually agreed to.

The second point I want to make is in terms of what role the Legislature plays here. It would appear that under subsection 3(4) the arbitrator can impose a "comprehensive revenue-sharing agreement that shall be deemed to have been arrived at by the parties."

When you look at section 4, it says, "The comprehensive revenue-sharing agreement shall be presented to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, who shall cause it to be laid before the Legislative Assembly." The arbitrator imposes an agreement on the parties. Then it comes before the Speaker and is laid before the assembly.

The question is, what is the assembly to do? Is the assembly to ratify this agreement in terms of making it official and something that the Legislature approves of, or is this just something that is for appearances' sake? We have annual reports, for example of the Privacy Commissioner, that are laid before the Speaker and the Speaker reports to the Legislature that these have been done by the Privacy Commissioner. That basically is a reporting function on behalf of the House by the Speaker.

1140

That question really needs to be decided, because I don't know on my reading of it that if you have an agreement that is imposed on the parties, you would essentially have an agreement. There's an agreement reached between the government of Ontario and the First Nations, and that would be something that would be legitimate, that could be acted on. But by putting in this provision, where it's put before the Legislative Assembly, are we saying there's another step? If there is another step, it should be clearly set out in terms of what the Legislature is required to do, because by imposing the agreement, in effect the Legislature's role would appear to be implicitly taken away, and it has been taken away because of the fact that the arbitrator can impose an agreement by the parties.

If the Legislature is to have any role in this, I would think that in terms of dealing with this, this is technically a money bill. This is definitely a piece of legislation that's going to involve money. Whether it's legitimate that it be before here is another question. Maybe the Speaker is going to have to make that decision. But certainly this will involve dollars and cents because it says that it is a "revenue-sharing agreement," and it's something between the government and the First Nations. I would think you would really expect the Legislature to have some role in this with respect to where the monies are going to go and how that's going to impact on the government.

It's a question that I think has to be looked at, something that is important, because the legal effect of this agreement on the Legislature is fundamental. Whether it has a role or not is to be decided, as I caution the member. When you look at the definition section in this act, you have a number of definitions. One of them, as was pointed out by, I believe, the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka, is "traditional lands," which "means lands that were traditionally travelled across or made use of by a First Nation...."

I would think that if you're going to have an agreement, you're going to need to have something much more clear and concise in terms of what lands are going to be the lands for this agreement. I think you would be looking at designated lands, as to what the deal is between the parties, because when you look at the definition for "comprehensive revenue-sharing agreement," it "means an agreement, including draft legislation, that will provide a comprehensive policy by which First Nations will receive benefits from natural resources extracted from their traditional lands, no matter what form those benefits take."

Now that's about as open-ended as you possibly can have. Whether the government wants to enter into this will be their decision, because quite frankly, they have the majority. They're going to have the say on whether this passes today, whether it goes to committee, or whether it even becomes law. So that's something that is important.

The reference in the definition of "comprehensive revenue-sharing agreement" that involves "including draft legislation"—I don't know where that's coming from, because I haven't seen any draft legislation on this at all. I don't know what that means. What we have here and what the member is putting forth is a procedure, and nothing more. Obviously, public hearings on this will be very important.

The other aspect that may not have been raised is the constitutionality of this. I don't know whether this is even constitutional, because the federal government is responsible with respect to the First Nations under the Indian Act in terms of how the government system they're putting in—I believe it was revamped and I think it is law, and I stand to be corrected, in terms of how federal jurisdiction plays over this, and especially whether federal jurisdiction, if there is federal jurisdiction, maintained over Indian lands is something the province can intercede on. So that's a question that will have to be looked at.

Ms Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome the students from Silver Birches public school in North Bay who are visiting with us today. In both galleries, we've got the students from Silver Birches. On behalf of the members here, I'd like to welcome them.

The Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order, but we welcome them nevertheless.

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): You'll have to forgive my voice, but I'll do the best I can. I want to comment on the bill because I think it's extremely important to get on the record about the issue the member from Timmins-James Bay is bringing up.

I had a different opening, and I want to switch because the member from Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford gives us an example of exactly why we're in some of the malaise and the mess we're in: more interested in the legalese; more interested in finding out whether or not we can delay this or shoo this or shoo that; go in different directions and talk about the law and forget about the fact that we've got people living in this province who don't even have a water source, that we've got people living in this province who don't have septic systems.

I, for one, am upset with the tone that people take; I'm disappointed that this is the type of talk we get. That's why our First Nations people are in such disarray. They get put down by law, they get put down by delay, they get put down by so many things, and yet they still persist in being partners with us. I so admire that people, the fact they have for so long put up with the kind of talk that's been going on about how they're going to take care of them, yet they're looking for the simple things in life.

All of us have to look in the mirror when we hear this kind of talk. The largest population of First Nations in Canada is the Six Nations along the Grand River, the territory. You want to know something? Listen to this. We've got 312 homes that have no water supply. We've got 559 homes that have to truck in their water. We've got 1,449 homes with individual wells that don't get tested. We've got 375 homes with piped water, 301 residents connected to a sewer system and 2,442 residents with individual septic systems. Get this: 312 homes with no service at all. That's our Ontario today for our First Nations people, just in this area.

I admire the member for bringing this up. I admire the fact that he's looking for our First Nations people to be served justice. That's all it is, to be served justice. We need to take this issue seriously. We have far too many First Nations people in Ontario who don't have the basic services that people take for granted. No water supply? No septic systems? That's not my Ontario, and I know it's not ours.

I ask us all to take a step back from political parties and ask ourselves, in Ontario, in 2004, should there be any resident without a source of water? Should there be any resident without a septic system?

Forgive my outburst. I do not want to turn this into a shouting match. I apologize to this House, but I will not apologize for the challenge the member has brought forward. The member is asking us to get over the legal stuff, to get over the arguments of why we can't do it, to get this thing to committee so we can hear the stories.

My brother worked in BC on a territory. He brought me to visit. I saw the stuff that was going on in BC. I've been to the north and I've seen some of those things. We would not let our relatives live like that. The First Nations people are our relatives. We cannot stand by and allow a citizen of Ontario not to have a water source and not to have a septic system. Any way we can correct this must be taken.

I applaud the member for coming forward with an idea that deserves our attention. I challenge each and every one of us to ask the simple question, are there people in the province of Ontario today who do not deserve a water source, who do not deserve a septic tank? I say no.

1150

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I'm pleased to be able to speak to this private member's issue today. I want to congratulate Mr Bisson, the member for Timmins-James Bay, for bringing it forward. I want to spend my time putting this in context.

What Mr Bisson is really talking about here is development that is very likely going to happen north of the 51st parallel. I say it's development that's very likely going to happen, and going to happen soon, because if we look at the forest maps across northern Ontario, northern Ontario is facing a wood supply gap, and by that I mean the mature forest, which was there before many of the non-native communities in northern Ontario were established. That mature forest is gradually being harvested. There is a new forest that's growing, but in many

locations that new forest will not be ready for harvesting by the forest industry for another 20 or 30 years. So there will be a gap. The mature forest will be harvested before the next forest is ready for commercial use. The only place where we can go to harvest additional forest is further north, north of the 51st parallel, where, by and large, there are no non-aboriginal communities. They're virtually all aboriginal communities. You might find the odd non-native nurse, teacher or pilot, perhaps even find Mr Bisson flying around, but otherwise virtually everything north of the 51st parallel is aboriginal communities.

There's also pressure from the mining industry, the discovery of diamonds and, of course, the diamond development at Attawapiskat. Any given day now, flying across the far north, north of the 51st parallel, you'll find De Beers diamonds and a number of other large, international mining companies out there, flying specially equipped airplanes, looking for the latest big find, whether it's gold, diamonds, titanium, tantalum or any of the so-called new-age minerals. There's huge pressure to move forward in terms of mining.

There's also huge pressure in terms of hydroelectric development. Much of our remaining falling water potential to develop hydroelectricity is in the far north. There's going to be huge pressure to develop. The question is, will this development be on a co-operative basis with First Nations, where First Nations benefit socially, economically and environmentally, or will it be as much of the development has happened in the past, that is, companies simply walk in, take out the resources and, often, have no involvement of First Nations in the economy and leave behind a polluted environment? That's the issue.

Mr Bisson has been very straightforward: What has happened in the past hasn't worked. In fact, what's happened in the past has very often been a disaster, environmentally, economically and socially. We cannot allow that to happen again.

In putting forward this resolution, Mr Bisson has actually done some research on what's happened in Quebec, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and British Columbia. In fact, Ontario is behind all of those other jurisdictions.

A couple of years ago, the Cree nation of Quebec and the Quebec government signed a comprehensive agreement on land use planning, environmental protection, resource utilization, training, education, and revenue-sharing for any mining, forestry or hydroelectric development which happens now and into the future in northern Quebec.

In Manitoba, the government of Manitoba has signed an agreement with some of the Cree nations there, that where there's going to be future hydroelectric development in Manitoba, the First Nations will be complete partners. First Nations people will be trained to do the construction work, the operating work, and they will share in the revenues that come from any future hydroelectric development.

In northern Saskatchewan, you've seen huge mining development. In almost every case, there's been a com-

prehensive agreement signed whereby First Nations have control over the mining. They have land use protections and control over environmental issues. Their people are trained to do the construction work, the mining operation work and all of the ancillary services, and they share in the revenue.

It's the same thing in British Columbia, but here in Ontario we lag behind—far behind.

Some would say, "Oh, well, just let the forestry companies and the mining companies work out one-on-one agreements with First Nations." In fact, if we look at our own history in this province, that's what went on before. If you look at much of what I call the near north, where I grew up or where Mr Bisson grew up, the First Nations there, yes, were included in the initial forest industry, so when the red pine and white pine sawmills opened, a lot of the people who worked in those mills were aboriginal people. They were the mainstay of the river drives, so in a lot of the romantic, historical pictures you see of people pushing wood down the river, a lot of those people were aboriginal people.

But when we ran out or ran short of red or white pine, and we moved on to other kinds of forest products, guess who the first people were to lose their jobs? Aboriginal people. And guess who the last people were to be trained for the new jobs and, in many cases, not trained at all? Aboriginal people. When, for environmental reasons, we stopped the wood drives going down the river and said all wood would now be trucked to the mills, guess who lost their jobs and were never trained to be reemployed in the new jobs? Aboriginal people. When we moved from using swede saws and horses to skid the wood, and moved from power saws to the very sophisticated equipment that you see now, wood processors, guess who lost their jobs in the forest industry and weren't trained for the new technology jobs? Aboriginal people.

So saying, "Well, just let the companies and individual First Nations work it out," is not satisfactory. Our own history shows us that, in fact, that process resulted, to a large extent, in aboriginal people being excluded from the economy in much of what is now known as the near north. That is why this kind of process is needed.

I would even argue that what Mr Bisson has put forward here is actually a good beginning, a very good beginning, but what we need are comprehensive agreements dealing with land use planning, dealing with environmental protection, dealing with issues like training and work experience and then, finally, jobs, as well as the revenue sharing. But this good, modest beginning is something that I think we need to adopt today.

I say to Liberal members, the last time Mr Bisson put this forward, Liberal members voted for it. I hope you will vote for it today, even though now this will place some responsibilities on your government.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr Bisson has two minutes to reply.

Mr Bisson: I want to make a couple of points very quickly, but before I do that I want to thank Kate Mulligan, the legislative intern who worked in my office. She worked quite hard on this, consulting along with me.

Kate is up there, and I'd like to acknowledge the work she has done. I've got to put a plug in for the legislative internship program. It is a wonderful program that interns and members and the public benefit from. So, Kate, I want to thank you for the work because you've worked quite hard on this.

Mr Hampton: Talking about free labour.

Mr Bisson: Free labour, right. That's what my leader says. Well, she'll be a summer student this year. Don't worry about it.

I want to say a couple of things. The member from Parry Sound-Muskoka, I still hope you vote for the legislation, that you change your mind. As you recognize, you did raise the points about what are traditional lands, and also the issue about First Nations south of 50. That's an issue we can deal with at committee. Let's at least refer the bill into committee. We'll have an opportunity to deal with it there.

I think the important part is—and Mr Levac hit the nail on the head. I want to thank him for the passion he showed in this debate, along with other members, but specifically Mr Levac. This is about trying to address what has been a long-time inequity. Mr Levac showed with passion, I think, what most Canadians feel deep inside. So let's not get held up if we don't like language in the bill. That's why we've got committees; we'll deal with it over there.

I want to thank the member from Stormont-Dundas—

Mr Hampton: Charlottenburgh.

Mr Bisson: Charlottenburgh. Sorry. I can't read my own handwriting. I want to thank you. The points you made were very good.

The member from Sault Ste Marie, you will find your dealings with First Nations probably among the best experiences you'll have here, as you started to indicate to me privately in discussions this morning. The member from Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford as well.

I just want to end on this note, and I think Mr Hampton, my leader, also pointed out what this is all about, and that is, let's finally get some common sense and let's finally get some equity to First Nations communities. It's not right that they can't participate in the development of wealth in their communities. This bill is an attempt to start that process, and I look for your support.

The Deputy Speaker: The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

SAFE STREETS STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LA SÉCURITÉ DANS LES RUES

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): We shall first deal with ballot item number 27.

Mr Lalonde has moved second reading of Bill 58, An Act to amend the Safe Streets Act, 1999 and the Highway

Traffic Act to recognize the fund-raising activities of legitimate charities and non-profit organizations.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would ask that this bill be referred to the standing committee on general government.

The Deputy Speaker: Agreed? Agreed.

FIRST NATIONS RESOURCE REVENUE SHARING ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 SUR LE PARTAGE AVEC LES PREMIÈRES NATIONS DES RECETTES TIRÉES

DE L'EXPLOITATION DES RESSOURCES

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): We shall now deal with ballot item number 28.

Mr Bisson has moved second reading of Bill 97, An Act respecting the sharing of resource revenues for First Nations.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): First of all, I just want to thank all members. This has been a long time coming. I'm a bit emotional. I would ask that the bill be referred to the standing committee on finance and economic affairs.

The Deputy Speaker: Agreed? Agreed.

All matters relating to private members' public business having been dealt with, I do now leave the chair. The House will resume at 1:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1201 to 1330.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

GEORGE VICE

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I was pleased to attend this morning the fire marshal's fire safety awards at the Royal York. More importantly, I was there on behalf of one of my constituents, George Vice. George Vice is a very well respected, well recognized leader in our community, with 50 years of service in the Rotary Club, as well as being the mastermind behind the fire safety house for Clarington Emergency and Fire Services. In fact, George single-handedly got this project off the ground with his personal contribution, and was joined by the Rotary Club of Bowmanville. Also in attendance were members of the fire safety community, Bill Hesson and Randy Reinheart, also showing respect for the work and considerable support that he has given the fire services in my riding of Durham.

Mr Vice is an outstanding community-builder. He is a former postmaster. He has a keen interest in local history and has published two books, one on his history as

postmaster of Bowmanville and one the history of the Rotary Club in Bowmanville. He holds the Paul Harris Fellowship Award, which is Rotary International's highest award, and he's a 50-year member of the club, as I said, and past president.

I'm confident that the members of the House will join me in congratulating Mr George Vice on his recent provincial fire safety award and his life-long service to our community. He is a community-builder. All of us should be happy to say—you know, the Rotary motto is "Service above self." George is a symbol for their very appropriate motto. I'm proud to have been a friend of George for many years, along with all of the community in Bowmanville and Clarington. They love George Vice, the fire safety award recipient.

CALABRESE CANADIANS

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I want to take this opportunity to announce a week of Calabrian, southern Italian, events in Toronto, the GTA and Ontario. It is a full week of events promoted and organized by the Federation of Calabrese of Ontario, with the participation of various groups and companies from the region of Calabria.

The events bring people together under the rubric of "sapori and saperi," which literally means flavours, knowledge and learning; food, culture and identity. The words sapori and saperi—interesting, wonderful alliteration—are two words that sound the same but are different, yet inextricably linked. This is an opportunity for all to savour and enjoy the true taste of Calabrian history and culture and traditions. Calabrians are proud to be Canadians, yet very proud to celebrate their roots.

I want to take this opportunity to thank Centro Scuola, headed by Alberto Di Giovanni, who co-sponsored some of the events, and thank Tony Silipo, who is a former member from Davenport and currently the president, for his leadership of the Federation of Calabrese of Ontario. If people need more information, they can call me.

ORDER OF ST GEORGE

Mr Kim Craitor (Niagara Falls): It is with great pleasure that I rise in the House today and congratulate a special group in my riding of Niagara Falls. The first priory of the Knightly Order of St George in North America was consecrated last year at Christ Church in Niagara Falls.

I was honoured to be the guest of the priory at the third investiture dinner held just a few months ago and had the good fortune of sitting with Lieutenant Colonel Gareth Green, the lord prior of the Knightly Order of Saint George here in Canada.

The Order of St George has had a continuous existence for the past 700 years. Originally a military and charitable order founded in 1326, military service is no longer an absolute requirement. The purpose of the Order of St George is to make a difference in the world of its members through compassion and the support of various

charities. I am proud that this order has been established in Niagara Falls and I commend all members of the Order of St George, under the leadership of Lord Prior Gareth Green, as they continue to do the good works of this distinctive group.

NINA BURNHAM

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): I stand to recognize the achievements of a former Six Nations band councillor who, after years of devotion to serving her community, has recently received the top honour awarded by the Anglican Church, the Order of Huron. The recipient, Nina Burnham, is a member of St Peter's at Ohsweken.

This award is reserved for outstanding and selfless work, and over the years Nina Burnham has proven herself truly worthy. Whether it be her work as a dental hygienist for many First Nations reservations, including Moose Factory and Attawapiskat, or her duties aboard the medical ship C.D. Howe, which travelled to many Inuit settlements of the eastern Arctic to provide preventive dentistry, Nina Burnham has dedicated herself to helping others.

Nina Burnham was born on Six Nations, and it is there that she made some of her most important contributions as a member of the elected band council, where she served as a councillor for 18 years, up until 2003. Ms Burnham also served on the Ontario Board of Parole for six years and the Ontario Trillium board for three years, and continues to be an active member of the Six Nations veterans association.

As National Aboriginal Day approaches—that would be June 21—I would like to take this opportunity to recognize Nina Burnham on the occasion of her receipt of the Order of Huron.

SPECIAL OLYMPICS

Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I rise today in the House to share with my colleagues a wonderful event I had the opportunity to participate in last weekend. My riding of Peterborough proudly hosted the Special Olympics 2004 spring games. More than 600 athletes and coaches converged on Peterborough for three days, from June 10 to June 12. The athletes competed in five- and 10-pin bowling, basketball, floor hockey, power lifting and swimming.

The Ontario Special Olympics serve an important purpose. It's not just about winning. The Special Olympics have created many lasting friendships over the years. Special Olympics programs within our schools get students with intellectual disabilities involved in sports and recreation. This builds on physical health, co-operation and self-esteem, and sets the athletes on a path of better integration within their community. Thank you to the many coaches, volunteers and sponsors who make events such as the spring games a possibility. I'd like to also commend the athletes for their spirit, courage and determination. It was truly inspiring.

Peterborough now has passed the torch to the Niagara region as the host of the Special Olympics summer games in 2005. Best wishes for a successful games.

LIQUOR LICENSING

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leeds-Grenville): In a scrum this morning, the consumer minister suggested that his bring-your-own-wine legislation wouldn't pass this session because of the opposition. We're getting used to Liberal stretches of the truth, and this is just another example. The reality is that the government hasn't called the bill for second reading. They are sitting on it, not the opposition. When the Liberal government does finally call the bill, the Conservative caucus will insist on public hearings.

Minister Watson, in what has become a depressingly familiar pattern for McGuinty Liberals, broke yet another promise when he tabled the bill. He had assured groups like Mothers Against Drunk Driving and the hotel and restaurant association that he would consult them before bringing in legislation. Instead of keeping his promise, he blindsided them. The minister also had the audacity to suggest in response to a Liberal lob-ball question that MADD supported his announcement. That was below the belt.

The Conservative Party wants the people Minister Watson treated with such disdain to have an opportunity for input. Despite protestations otherwise, the McGuinty Liberals are the only ones playing political games with this legislation.

1340

SENIOR CITIZENS

Ms Judy Marsales (Hamilton West): I rise in the House today to pay tribute to all the seniors in Ontario this month. June is Seniors Month in Ontario. Hamilton West has many, many remarkable seniors. However, I would like to pay tribute to one. Today I will tell you about Dorothy Adler. She's an 88-year-old woman who was born and raised in Hamilton and has operated a family business, Adler Furniture, in our city for many, many years. She's currently living at Shalom Village in west Hamilton. I was recently at Shalom Village. She's been involved in so many community activities, so many, numerous committees and organizations that I don't have time right now to itemize them all.

Despite her health challenges, Dorothy has persevered through all her difficulties with her great positive thinking and her zest for life. Whether she's shopping at the various Hamilton malls, lunching with her friends or family, volunteering at socials and teas, or with her regular canasta games, she is very active indeed. Shalom Village residents regard Dorothy as the epitome of a modern senior. It's quite obvious that Dorothy has no intention of slowing down.

My visits to various seniors' homes in west Hamilton have resulted in warm and gracious welcomes, and it's

sometimes difficult to leave. The wonderful hospitality recently demonstrated at Villa Italia was something to behold; I was very overwhelmed.

I want to report to you that the provincial budget has been very well received by the seniors in west Hamilton.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Thank you.

IMMIGRANTS

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): After listening to a lot of bitching, whining and complaining by the opposition, let me give you some good news of how Ontario Liberals are keeping another election promise.

Recently the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration signed a letter of intent with the federal government to begin negotiations on a federal-provincial immigration agreement. This is an important and long overdue step. Ontario is the only province that does not have an immigration agreement with the federal government.

For too long, Ontario's immigrants have not received the same attention as immigrants in other provinces because the previous government did not want to forge working relationships with other levels of government. Ontario receives many highly educated immigrants who, unfortunately, are unable to find jobs in their chosen profession. In fact, many can't make a living, as all of us know.

Will this federal-provincial agreement help new immigrants and internationally trained professionals? Yes. The agreement proposes a seamless integration of services that provide comprehensive one-stop shopping for newcomers and prospective immigrants in accessing settlement support.

I know the opposition doesn't like what I have to say, but I just want all of you to know that we're here to keep our promises, and this is one we intend to keep.

RURAL ONTARIO

Mrs Carol Mitchell (Huron-Bruce): I rise today to speak about the report, Investing in People, which was commissioned by the previous government in 2002. I must say this report took a very negative view of rural Ontario.

There is a feeling of outrage in my community, in our rural communities. People feel slighted and devalued. This is a result of a column in the National Post, and I can tell you, they are in more need of life support than rural Ontario.

This report is not the report of our Liberal government. Our government is investing in rural Ontario and the north, including more than \$900 million for our municipal infrastructure. As well, as part of our government's commitment to rural communities, we are developing a rural plan to articulate our vision for our rural communities, and these consultations have already begun.

Rural Ontario has always paid its way. Investments have paid off, and people's hard work has built strong

communities. Our rural people, when ignored by the big financial institutions, turn to themselves to create solutions, and they invest by their own innovation. Credit unions, mutual insurance companies, independent phone companies: That's rural Ontario.

People in rural Ontario should be proud of where they are from. A healthy, prosperous rural Ontario benefits all of Ontario.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Mr John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on finance and economic affairs and move its adoption.

Clerk at the Table (Mr Todd Decker): Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 83, An Act to implement Budget measures / Projet de loi 83, Loi mettant en oeuvre certaines mesures budgétaires.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Shall the report be received and adopted?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1345 to 1355.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour will stand one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Fonseca, Peter	Peterson, Tim
Bartolucci, Rick	Hoy, Pat	Phillips, Gerry
Bentley, Christopher	Jeffrey, Linda	Pupatello, Sandra
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Kular, Kuldip	Qaadri, Shafiq
Bountrogianni, Marie	Kwinter, Monte	Racco, Mario G.
Bradley, James J.	Leal, Jeff	Ramsay, David
Broten, Laurel C.	Levac, Dave	Rinaldi, Lou
Caplan, David	Marsales, Judy	Ruprecht, Tony
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Matthews, Deborah	Sandals, Liz
Colle, Mike	McMeekin, Ted	Smith, Monique
Cordiano, Joseph	McNeely, Phil	Sorbara, Greg
Craiton, Kim	Meilleur, Madeleine	Watson, Jim
Delaney, Bob	Milloy, John	Wilkinson, John
Dhillon, Vic	Mitchell, Carol	Wong, Tony C.
Dombrowsky, Leona	Oraziotti, David	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Duguid, Brad	Parsons, Ernie	Zimmer, David
Duncan, Dwight	Peters, Steve	

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please stand one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Horwath, Andrea	Prue, Michael
Baird, John R.	Jackson, Cameron	Runciman, Robert W.
Barrett, Toby	Kormos, Peter	Sterling, Norman W.
Bisson, Gilles	Marchese, Rosario	Tascona, Joseph N.
Chudleigh, Ted	Martel, Shelley	Wilson, Jim
Dunlop, Garfield	Martiniuk, Gerry	Witmer, Elizabeth
Eves, Ernie	Miller, Norm	Yakubski, John
Hardeman, Ernie	O'Toole, John	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 50; the nays are 23.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Pursuant to the order of the House dated Thursday, June 10, 2004, the bill is ordered for third reading.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

BLIND PERSONS' RIGHTS AMENDMENT ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES DROITS DES AVEUGLES

Mr Martiniuk moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 103, An Act to amend the Blind Persons' Rights Act / Projet de loi 103, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les droits des aveugles.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): This bill extends the Blind Persons' Rights Act to all persons with disabilities if a guide dog is of assistance. Currently the law only protects guide dogs for the blind. These dogs are truly amazing. They can help with seizure assistance, open doors, push a help button, physically alert a deaf person if there is a baby crying or a phone ringing, and assist those with autism.

I'd like to thank Heather Fowler, founder and executive director of National Service Dogs, for all her hard work and assistance in this bill.

1400

KEY AIRCRAFT SERVICES INC. ACT, 2004

Mrs Jeffrey moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr7, An Act to revive Key Aircraft Services Inc.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Pursuant to standing order 84, this bill stands referred to the standing committee on regulations and private bills.

MOTIONS

STANDING COMMITTEES

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): Mr Speaker, I believe I have unanimous consent to put forward a motion regarding standing committees.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

Hon Mr Duncan: I move that the orders of the House dated December 2, 2003, respecting committee member-

ship and meeting times be rescinded, and that notwithstanding standing order 106, the membership of the following committees be appointed for the duration of the 38th Parliament:

(a) standing committee on justice policy: Mike Brown, Jim Brownell, Bob Delaney, Kevin Flynn, Tim Hudak, Frank Klees, Peter Kormos, David Oraziatti and Mario Racco;

(b) standing committee on social policy: Ted Arnott, Ted Chudleigh, Kim Craiton, Peter Fonseca, Jeff Leal, Rosario Marchese, Ted McMeekin, Khalil Ramal and Kathleen Wynne;

(c) standing committee on general government: Marilyn Churley, Vic Dhillon, Brad Duguid, Jean-Marc Lalonde, Deb Matthews, Jerry Ouellette, Shafiq Qaadri, Lou Rinaldi and John Yakabuski;

(d) standing committee on estimates: Wayne Arthurs, Caroline Di Cocco, Andrea Horwath, Cameron Jackson, Kuldip Kular, Phil McNeely, John Milloy, John O'Toole and Jim Wilson;

(e) standing committee on finance and economic affairs: Toby Barrett, Mike Colle, Pat Hoy, Judy Marsales, Phil McNeely, Carol Mitchell, John O'Toole, Michael Prue and John Wilkinson;

(f) standing committee on government agencies: Lorenzo Berardinetti, Ernie Parsons, Michael Gravelle, Andrea Horwath, Laurie Scott, Monique Smith, David Oraziatti, Joseph Tascona and Elizabeth Witmer;

(g) standing committee on the Legislative Assembly: Donna Cansfield, Kim Craiton, Bob Delaney, Ernie Hardeman, Linda Jeffrey, Rosario Marchese, Norm Miller, Mario Racco and Mario Sergio;

(h) standing committee on public accounts: Laurel Broten, Jim Flaherty, Shelley Martell, Bill Mauro, Julia Munro, Richard Patten, Liz Sandals, Norm Sterling and David Zimmer;

(i) standing committee on regulations and private bills: Gilles Bisson, Marilyn Churley, Jeff Leal, Gerry Martiniuk, Bill Murdoch, Tim Peterson, Khalil Ramal, Maria Van Bommel and Tony Wong; and

That all standing orders which currently apply to the standing committee on justice and social policy shall apply to the standing committee on justice policy and the standing committee on social policy; and

That the bills currently referred to the standing committee on justice and social policy stand referred to the following committees: standing committee on justice policy, Bills 78 and 88; standing committee on social policy, Bills 55, 57 and 71; and

That notwithstanding standing order 115, the Chairs of the standing committees shall be apportioned as follows: Members of the party forming the government shall chair five standing committees; members of the party forming the official opposition shall chair three standing committees; a member of a recognized party in opposition to the government shall chair one standing committee; and

That the following schedule for committee meetings be established for this Parliament:

The standing committee on justice policy may meet on Wednesday and Thursday mornings;

The standing committee on social policy may meet on Monday and Tuesday afternoons, following routine proceedings;

The standing committee on general government may meet on Monday and Wednesday afternoons, following routine proceedings;

The standing committee on estimates may meet on Tuesday and Wednesday afternoons, following routine proceedings;

The standing committee on government agencies may meet on Wednesday mornings;

The standing committee on regulations and private bills may meet on Wednesday mornings;

The standing committee on finance and economic affairs may meet on Thursday mornings and Thursday afternoons, following routine proceedings;

The standing committee on public accounts may meet on Thursday mornings;

The standing committee on the Legislative Assembly may meet on Thursday afternoons following routine proceedings.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding the standing committee on government agencies.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Mr Duncan has moved that a motion be put forward without notice regarding government agencies. Agreed? Agreed.

Hon Mr Duncan: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 106(e), selections made from certificates that are deemed referred to the standing committee on government agencies and are received June 11, 2004, and June 18, 2004, may be made by any one member of each recognized party.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I move that, pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 pm until 9:30 pm on Thursday, June 17, 2004, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1407 to 1412.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Mr Duncan has moved government notice of motion number 134.

All those in favour will please stand one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Hoy, Pat	Phillips, Gerry
Bartolucci, Rick	Jeffrey, Linda	Pupatello, Sandra
Bentley, Christopher	Kennedy, Gerard	Qaadri, Shafiq
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Kular, Kuldip	Racco, Mario G.
Bountrogianni, Marie	Kwinter, Monte	Ramsay, David
Bradley, James J.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Rinaldi, Lou
Brotten, Laurel C.	Leal, Jeff	Ruprecht, Tony
Bryant, Michael	Levac, Dave	Sandals, Liz
Caplan, David	Marsales, Judy	Sergio, Mario
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Matthews, Deborah	Smith, Monique
Colle, Mike	McMeekin, Ted	Smitherman, George
Cordiano, Joseph	McNeely, Phil	Sorbara, Greg
Craiton, Kim	Meilleur, Madeleine	Watson, Jim
Delaney, Bob	Milloy, John	Wilkinson, John
Dhillon, Vic	Mitchell, Carol	Wong, Tony C.
Dombrowsky, Leona	Oraziotti, David	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Duguid, Brad	Parsons, Ernie	Zimmer, David
Duncan, Dwight	Peters, Steve	
Fonseca, Peter	Peterson, Tim	

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please stand one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Horwath, Andrea	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Baird, John R.	Jackson, Cameron	Prue, Michael
Barrett, Toby	Kormos, Peter	Runciman, Robert W.
Bisson, Gilles	Marchese, Rosario	Sterling, Norman W.
Chudleigh, Ted	Martel, Shelley	Tascona, Joseph N.
Dunlop, Garfield	Martiniuk, Gerry	Wilson, Jim
Eves, Ernie	Miller, Norm	Witmer, Elizabeth
Hardeman, Ernie	O'Toole, John	Yakabuski, John

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 55; the nays are 24.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

VISITORS

Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington): Mr Speaker, on a point of order: I'd just like to indicate, for the former members of the House, that a young page who was here a year and a half ago accompanied her father to the Legislature. Lauren Jackson is here today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): That's not a point of order, but we welcome her.

Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): Mr Speaker, on a point of order: I would ask members to help me welcome Olive and Fred Cheron from Scarborough, great friends of mine, and also Rick and Nancy Archdekin from Wasaga Beach.

The Deputy Speaker: That's not a point of order, but we welcome them.

DEFERRED VOTES

ADAMS MINE LAKE ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004

SUR LE LAC DE LA MINE ADAMS

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 49, An Act to prevent the disposal of waste at the Adams Mine site and to amend the Environmental Protection Act in respect of the disposal of waste in lakes / Projet de loi 49, Loi visant à empêcher l'élimination de déchets à la mine Adams et à modifier la Loi sur la protection de l'environnement en ce qui concerne l'élimination de déchets dans des lacs.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1417 to 1422.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Gerretsen, John	Parsons, Ernie
Bartolucci, Rick	Horwath, Andrea	Peters, Steve
Bentley, Christopher	Hoy, Pat	Peterson, Tim
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Jeffrey, Linda	Phillips, Gerry
Bisson, Gilles	Kennedy, Gerard	Prue, Michael
Bountrogianni, Marie	Kular, Kuldeep	Pupatello, Sandra
Bradley, James J.	Kwinter, Monte	Qaadri, Shafiq
Broten, Laurel C.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Racco, Mario G.
Bryant, Michael	Leal, Jeff	Ramsay, David
Cansfield, Donna H.	Levac, Dave	Rinaldi, Lou
Caplan, David	Marchese, Rosario	Ruprecht, Tony
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Marsales, Judy	Sandals, Liz
Colle, Mike	Martel, Shelley	Sergio, Mario
Cordiano, Joseph	Matthews, Deborah	Smith, Monique
Craiton, Kim	McGuinty, Dalton	Smitherman, George
Delaney, Bob	McMeekin, Ted	Sorbara, Greg
Dhillon, Vic	McNeely, Phil	Watson, Jim
Dombrowsky, Leona	Meilleur, Madeleine	Wilkinson, John
Duguid, Brad	Milloy, John	Wong, Tony C.
Duncan, Dwight	Mitchell, Carol	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Fonseca, Peter	Oraziotti, David	Zimmer, David

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please stand and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Amott, Ted	Hardeman, Ernie	Runciman, Robert W.
Baird, John R.	Jackson, Cameron	Sterling, Norman W.
Barrett, Toby	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tascona, Joseph N.
Chudleigh, Ted	Miller, Norm	Wilson, Jim
Dunlop, Garfield	O'Toole, John	Witmer, Elizabeth
Eves, Ernie	Ouellette, Jerry J.	Yakabuski, John

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 63; the nays are 18.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

ORAL QUESTIONS

HEALTH CARE SERVICES

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): My question today is for the Premier. The revelation that some of the

money collected from your new health tax will go toward water and sewer piping is alarming, to say the very least, especially following your expensive taxpayer-funded radio ads. It's unfortunate that construction associations didn't know this in the pre-budget consultations, or they might have been at some of those hearings asking for more money for health care.

Premier, you keep telling Ontarians that your new government will improve health care in this province.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Question.

Mr Dunlop: When you say this, people naturally assume that you're referring to the improvement of direct, front-line health care services, like getting an MRI or even getting an appointment with a chiropractor.

The Deputy Speaker: Question.

Mr Dunlop: Tonight we will vote on the most regressive budget in the history of our province—

The Deputy Speaker: The member's time has expired. Premier?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I appreciate the—I think it was more of a short story than a question. But let me take the opportunity once again to give the facts on this particular issue.

The premium this year will raise an additional \$1.6 billion. We will, by means of this budget, spend through the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care an additional \$2.2 billion. Every penny raised by this premium will be invested through the Ministry of Health in better quality health care for the people of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker: Supplementary?

Mr John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): My question is also for the Premier. It's not a laughing matter, but you do need a sense of humour to listen to this. The Premier and the health minister have been all over the map on this. Day one, "Yes, we're spending it on infrastructure, but it's a good idea because it's going to improve the health of Ontarians." The next day the Premier says, "No, because the \$1.6 billion, that's really only going to health care." The next day the Premier and the Minister of Health are back on the infrastructure. They're all over the map.

It's been proven and documented by doctors and scientists that laughter is good for your health. Now, using that logic, can we expect that if we're investing taxpayers' health dollars in sewer pipes, the Minister of Health will soon be making an announcement that they will be making a health care investment in Yuk Yuks comedy club?

Hon Mr McGuinty: We'll try to ground this in reality. I'll do my best for the members opposite.

If I may make reference to our recently released budget, on page 43 it tells us that there are new investments to the tune of roughly \$2.2 billion to be made through the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care this year to improve the quality of care for the people of Ontario—2.2 billion additional new dollars for the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

What we're doing in part, so we have sufficient funds to make that investment, is asking the people of Ontario to invest in their health care system by means of a new premium. That premium only generates \$1.6 billion, even though the total investment through the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care is \$2.2 billion. Again I say to the members opposite, every single penny that's generated by the new premium will be invested through the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care in better quality care for the people of Ontario.

Mr Yakubuski: Again, the answers change every day. It's in infrastructure; it's not in infrastructure. We know where those health care dollars are not being spent. They are not being spent on physiotherapy, they are not being spent on chiropractic, and they are not being spent on much-needed eye exams. They're being spent on sewer projects. I can just see it: Walking down the street in Toronto, you're going to see all kinds of confused people standing around when a backhoe is working and there will be a sign up there, "Your Health Care Dollars at Work." They're not going to understand it. They understand health care dollars as MRIs and other health procedures.

Will you come clean with the people of Ontario? Back off on this idea; it's a bad one. Come clean, and come up with something better.

1430

Hon Mr McGuinty: Again, the members opposite don't want to allow the facts to get in the way of their particular story. This additional fund, raised by means of the premium, will contribute toward the improved quality of health care for Ontarians.

In addition to new MRIs and CTs—in fact, nine—I recited this list before, and it's worth hearing again: 36,000 more cardiac procedures; 2,300 more joint replacements; 9,000 more cataract surgeries; 8,000 more full-time nursing positions; 78,600 more Ontarians receiving mental health support in their communities; \$406 million more for long-term care; 150 family health teams—the list goes on and on but time does not permit. I'm proud to say that every single penny generated by this new premium goes into better-quality health care for the people of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker: New question.

Mrs Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): My question is also to the Premier. The demonstration, the rally today, demonstrates that people in this province continue to be very angry about your decision to delist health services such as chiropractic, eye exams and physiotherapy.

We now find that there was never any pre-budget consultation about the delisting of services. There was no opportunity to meet with the chiropractors. Requests for meetings with the minister were refused. In a recent survey, 70% of Ontarians opposed your move to delist chiropractic care.

Curt Harnett, the silver- and bronze-medal cyclist, states about your decision, "My sense is that and statistics will show that delisting will have a negative impact

on health care and cost the government more because people will only go to general practitioners to seek alternative care."

I would ask you, Premier, based on that statement, based on the fact that we know health care costs are going to increase, why you did not consider the consequences of this short-sighted decision to delist chiropractic services.

Hon Mr McGuinty: With the delisting of chiropractic services, we have now joined the majority of Canadian provinces, which no longer publicly fund these services.

The former minister well understands what I am about to describe. This is some of the nature of the challenge before us. When I got here 14 years ago, health care consumed approximately one third of the budget. Today it is just under one half of the budget. Notwithstanding that, we're investing an additional \$2.4 billion in health care this year.

So you have to make some tough decisions along the way about what we are doing at present that we think we could deliver by means of higher priorities. So we said, for example, that from our perspective shorter waits, when it comes to radiation, chemotherapy, cardiac surgery and cataracts, are of greater importance to the people of Ontario than chiropractic. Hence, the reason we made that difficult decision.

Mrs Witmer: The reality is, Premier, that the decisions you have made will hurt people.

You mentioned eye disease. I would say to you that the decision you have made to delist eye exams for people between the ages of 20 and 65 is extremely short-sighted. You are the Premier who said you were not going to privatize health care, that you would not introduce two tiers. I can tell you there are eye diseases that are going to go undetected if people do not have eye exams—for example glaucoma, macular degeneration, and we know that diabetes is often diagnosed because someone has the opportunity to go for an eye exam.

I say to you, will you do the right thing? Will you demonstrate that you have compassion, that you're concerned about the possibility of people going blind, and will you reverse your decision to delist eye exams?

Hon Mr McGuinty: The former Minister of Health will also know that all medically necessary eye examinations will continue to be covered regardless of the patient's age. So if an Ontarian feels they have some problem with their eyes, then they'll go see their doctor and the doctor examines them; if the doctor feels it warrants a referral to a specialist, then that referral is made. This is all about primary care.

Beyond that, of course, we're investing significant new dollars in expanding primary care throughout the province of Ontario with 150 new family health teams.

Mrs Witmer: You mentioned that medically necessary eye exams will still be covered. Surely you know that individuals in this province are not aware when they have a serious eye problem or disease. I recently heard about a young person who went to have an eye exam because of your delisting and he wanted to make sure he

could have this paid for. I can tell you, his optometrist discovered a condition that he was totally unaware of and that could have caused blindness.

I ask you again, do you fully understand the consequences? People don't know when they have glaucoma. They don't know that they have diabetes. They don't know that maybe they have macular degeneration. Will you reverse your decision and relist eye exams?

Hon Mr McGuinty: Again, the former minister raises the spectre, practising the politics of fear here, when she should know better.

Interjections.

Hon Mr McGuinty: This is important. The members opposite may not want to hear this. Ontario was the only province that provided coverage for routine eye exams for adults between ages 20 and 64. For quite some time now, every other province in the federation has provided this kind of delisting and this kind of more limited coverage.

It is important for me to confirm that all medically necessary eye examinations remain covered through the public service. That is important. Notwithstanding anything the former minister might put forward to the contrary, we're still covering all medically necessary eye examinations.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is to the Premier. I want to read you your promise again that you're playing on the radio airwaves of Ontario: "I'm Dalton McGuinty, and I want you to know that every penny of Ontario's new health premium will go to health care." Then you turn to page 12 of your budget, and it shows that next fiscal year, 2005-06, you will take in \$1.6 billion more in dedicated health care taxes and revenue, but you will invest only \$600 million more in health care services. In other words, you will invest \$1 billion less in health care services than you're taking in through your health tax and that you're getting from the federal government. Can you tell the people of Ontario, Premier, what happened to your promise?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): Again, nothing has changed, including the questions I'm getting from the members opposite.

Every penny we generate by means of this new Ontario health care premium will be invested in better health care for the people of Ontario. It's as simple and as straightforward as that.

Mr Hampton: Turn to page 12 of your own budget, because what it clearly shows is this: You're going to get \$800 million more from your aggressive and unfair health tax, \$800 million more than you're getting this year, and you're going to get \$800 million of dedicated health care funding from the federal government. That's what your budget shows. But then you look at the Ministry of Health line and their expenditure only increases by \$600 million. In other words, \$1 billion that

you're taking in either from the federal government through dedicated health care funds or from your health tax isn't going to health care services.

I call that a broken promise, Premier. What do you call it? Just another day?

1440

Hon Mr McGuinty: I would call it ineffective NDP spin. Here are the facts: This particular year we'll raise \$1.6 billion by way of the premium. We'll spend \$2.2 billion in health care. Next year we'll raise \$2.4 billion by way of the premium and spend \$2.8 billion in health care. Every single penny generated by the premium will go into better health care for the people of Ontario.

Mr Hampton: Do you remember those days when you used to point at the Conservatives and say, "You're getting this dedicated health care funding from the federal government, but you're not spending it on health care"? When you add up what you're going to take in through your very unfair and regressive health tax and what you're going to get from the federal government—and it's all delineated; some of it's for vaccination, some of it is for primary health care reform, some of it is for MRIs, CAT scans and those kinds of things—when you take in both the health tax money and the federal money, you're not spending all of that money on health care services.

So either you're doing what the Conservatives used to do, taking the federal money and spending it somewhere else, or you're using the health tax money and you're spending it somewhere else. Which is it? What happened to your promise? Did it go the way of all your other promises—broken?

Hon Mr McGuinty: What can I say except the same thing again? Every single penny to be generated by way of the premium will be invested in health care for the people of Ontario. More than that, I'm sure the member opposite recognizes that close to one half of the revenues that we have right now are going into health care.

So not only is our premium money going to go into health care, a lot of the sales tax money goes into health care; a lot of the corporate income tax money goes into health care; a lot of the personal income tax money goes into health care; a lot of the liquor tax goes into health care; a lot of the gas tax goes into health care.

We're looking for as much money as we can. Nearly one half of the budget goes into health care. I can assure you that every single penny generated by the premium will go into health care as well.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): New question.

Mr Hampton: To the Premier again: Simply add up the numbers. Your budget delineates all the numbers. When you add up the federal money, when you add in the health tax money, you're spending \$1 billion less on health care services than you're taking in through the taxes and the dedicated federal funds. I want to add to that. At the same time, though, that you're taking in a billion dollars in health tax revenue that you're not spending on health care, you're going to cut chiropractic

services, physiotherapy services and optometry services. This sounds to me like two promises broken. You promised before the campaign that you would not cut health services, but here you go, taking in tax money and not spending it on health care, and at the same time you're cutting health care services. To me, that sounds like two broken promises. What is it to you?

Hon Mr McGuinty: Again, we're going to invest an additional \$2.2 billion this year through the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, next year an additional \$2.8 billion. The member asked what it is that we are getting in return. I can return to the list, but we are absolutely determined to reduce waiting times for the people of Ontario.

More than just putting more money into health care, more than making record investments in health care, we're going to get record results. We're talking about shorter wait times, whether it's for cataracts, hip replacements, knee replacements, cardiac surgery, chemotherapy or radiation. We're also doing a lot more to expand primary care throughout the province of Ontario, with 150 family health teams. More than that, we're investing in home care, we're expanding the quality of services offered in our nursing homes. All of that is the result of the investments that we are making in health care, including the contribution that the good people of Ontario are making to their health care system by way of their premium.

Mr Hampton: The Premier now wants to talk about health care spending over two years. OK, you can talk about health care spending over two years, but then you have to take into account the dedicated federal revenue over two years and the health tax over two years. When you do that, you'll be investing \$1.5 billion less in health care than you're getting from the health tax and the federal revenue. So if you try to do it that way, your health care credibility gap grows to over \$1 billion.

Quit trying to shuffle. Just admit to the people of Ontario that all the money that's coming in through the health care tax isn't being spent on health care services. Admit, as you did the other day, that a lot of it's going to be spent on sewer pipe, on water pipe. But those aren't health care services, are they?

Hon Mr McGuinty: The leader of the third party just cannot possibly accept good news. There's good news here for the people of Ontario. We're investing significantly more in health care on behalf of the people of Ontario. Every single penny of the new premium that we are getting from the people of Ontario will be invested in better quality health care for them. Finally, for the first time we're bringing a results-based approach to the way that we budget for health care. It's more than a matter of just putting more money into health care. We want better results with shorter wait times, more family health teams, better quality care in our nursing homes, more home care available to seniors who want to stay in their homes. Those are the kinds of things as a result of investing more money in health care for Ontarians.

Mr Hampton: Premier, Paul Martin wants you to know that all of your back and forth on your health tax

and on cutting chiropractors, physiotherapists and optometrists is not being received as good news out there. In fact, he says it's not good news at all, because here's what happens: You're going after modest- and middle-income families. You're going to lift over \$2 billion from their pockets, but they don't see the corresponding health investments. A modest-income parent, a single-parent mom with an income of \$30,000, sees her provincial income tax go up by 24%, yet you're cutting optometry, cutting physiotherapy and cutting chiropractors. Tell the people of Ontario how that's good news, and tell Paul Martin how that's good news.

Hon Mr McGuinty: Just so we're clear about how progressive this premium is, in Alberta, if you're earning \$22,000, your premium is \$528. In BC, if you're earning \$24,000, your premium is \$648. In Ontario, 48% of our seniors pay nothing, 43% of all Ontario tax filers pay nothing, and 37% of all Ontario families will pay nothing. That's how progressive this premium is.

Notwithstanding those many exemptions, we're going to get the money necessary to improve the quality of health care, and in particular reduce wait times, which will benefit all Ontarians.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): My question is to the Minister of Finance. You know that the committee on finance and economic affairs was forced to meet over the last six hours, actually. It was a time-allocated Bill 86. Actually, the members of the committee from all parties listened respectfully to the many stakeholders that were given absolutely no notice; Friday afternoon they were called to appear sort of on Tuesday morning. But in the short time, we heard from many, many unsettled people—chiropractors, optometrists, physiotherapists and their patients. These are people suffering from pain and disease, potential risks to their lives. We heard from CUPE and OPSEU labour leaders. They are very concerned about the new health tax and its lack of progressivity.

Your committee voted against every thoughtful amendment that we put forward. In fact, they disallowed all of the NDP amendments. Minister, could you tell me what you achieve with these hearings—

Interjections.

Mr O'Toole: Admit they were a sham. Name one single thing you're prepared to do after all these hearings.

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): I know that my friend was very active in the hearings. I'm wondering why in his question he didn't mention that representatives of the Ontario Medical Association came before the committee and said they were very supportive of the budget and its measures to reduce waiting times for critical surgeries, and in home care and primary care. It is interesting as well that physiotherapists came before the committee and said, to paraphrase their comments, that the delisting that is provided in our budget really was preordained from changes that were made to the way in

which they were funded during eight and a half years of underfunding by the Progressive Conservative government.

1450

Mr O'Toole: I fully understand that you had an opportunity to put some of your spokespersons as presenters in the committee. They're at all your fundraisers. We understand that. But who you neglected to hear from were the people of Ontario. Their hearts are broken and they are suffering in pain. Even members of your own caucus know that this delisting is a tragedy. It's the privatization of health care. It's a sham. You were never even prepared to listen to one of the amendments, after listening to the stakeholders. More importantly, it's not just the doctors and chiropractors, it's the victims, those persons who depend on the health care system to be there the way we provided it. I think really the whole deal here is that you have to force this bill through so that you can increase the taxes on July 1.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Question.

Mr O'Toole: Tell the people just one change out of all the hearings that you're prepared to make. Give them one glimmer of hope that you're prepared to listen to one, single change. Cancel the premium. Relist optometry.

The Deputy Speaker: Question.

Mr O'Toole: Relist chiropractic, physiotherapy.

The Deputy Speaker: Minister.

Hon Mr Sorbara: We are prepared to move this bill through as quickly as we possibly can after the hearings, and given what we've heard, so that we can begin to reinvest in our public education system; so that we can give seniors in our communities, those living on fixed incomes, a 25% increase in their property tax credit; so that we can move ahead with a \$25-million investment in children's public health; so that we can start to reinvest in home care again; so that we can start to have a decent level of long-term care in our community.

We are going to move this budget through so that we can start to bring this province back to financial health, so that we can have the revenues and manage our expenses and get ourselves out of the terrible debt spiral left by the previous government during eight and a half years.

HEALTH CARE SERVICES

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a question to the Premier. Your decision to cut OHIP funding for chiropractic services makes no sense and neither does your decision to cut eye exams from OHIP. What makes even less sense, though, is to require a patient to get a referral from a doctor in order to get access to a medically necessary eye exam.

There are over three million people in Ontario today who see an optometrist every year and they don't need a doctor's referral to do that. They have direct access to these important primary health care providers. Premier, it's going to cost the health care system more to force patients to see a doctor to get a referral to get a medically

necessary eye exam. Why don't you just do the right thing and cover eye exams by optometrists under OHIP?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): The Minister of Health.

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I have had the great privilege and fortune of answering this question a few times in the House. I'm happy to do it one more time for the honourable member.

First off, I think it's very important to note that our government was stuck with some difficult decisions around this, made more difficult by the fact that those two parties, while in government, did not do anything to increase the fees for physiotherapists or for optometrists, which meant that we were faced with an enormous unfunded liability in the form of extraordinary pressures on their fees.

People will know that optometrists themselves were lobbying for the changes that were brought forward. But the fact of the matter is that we have, with the changes we offer up on optometry, reached out deliberately to protect those in our society who are most vulnerable because we believe they deserve more protection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Answer.

Hon Mr Smitherman: People under 20, people with medical conditions and our seniors will continue to enjoy the benefit of these services.

Ms Martel: I would remind the minister that it's your government that's cutting OHIP funding for eye exams altogether. That's your legacy, Minister. I also want to point out that it makes no sense at all to force patients to see a family doctor to get a referral to see an optometrist. They are highly trained, highly qualified primary care providers. You don't need a referral to get access to their care today. Forcing patients to get a referral for an eye exam to be covered under OHIP is going to cost the health care system more. Those people who don't have a family doctor will end up in an after-hours clinic to get a referral or will end up in the emergency department, and that will cost the health care system more.

These cuts to OHIP services make no sense. Minister, will you reverse your decision and cover visits to an optometrist under OHIP?

Hon Mr Smitherman: To those 800,000 or one million Ontarians who don't have a family doctor, they have that party to thank because it was that party, when they were entrusted with the responsibilities of governing in our province, that thought the way to deal with—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Hon Mr Smitherman: They thought the way to deal with health care costs was to eliminate the family doctor, so they stopped producing them. And this is the wisdom that is supposed to direct us.

I want to say very clearly that primary care means providing access to people with a team approach that can enhance the quality of the care they provide. This is our model. They prefer to operate in the silo world, where everybody goes to a different player. But the fact of the matter is that most Ontarians trust their family doctor.

The Deputy Speaker: Answer.

Hon Mr Smitherman: They trust that relationship with their doctor to provide them with advice about what other care they might require. The honourable member has already decided that every person needs to go to an optometrist, and the fact of the matter is—

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minister. New question.

CLASS SIZE

Mr Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): My question is to the Minister of Education. An essential part of the McGuinty government's agenda for change is the effort to reduce class size in the all-important early years from JK to grade 3. We know that students do better in smaller classes, and helping them succeed in the early years will put them on track toward success for the rest of their lives.

Constituents of my riding of Scarborough Centre are supportive of the McGuinty government's initiative, but they want details. What resources has the province put in place to reduce class sizes, and what is the Toronto District School Board doing to ensure that class sizes are reduced starting this September?

Hon Gerard Kennedy (Minister of Education): To respond to the member on behalf of his constituents, he should know that those selfsame constituents had their children neglected by the previous government. Fifteen percent of the children in this province are educated by the Toronto District School Board, and they were left to be lost in the crowd in classes of 30 and 40, inordinately high class sizes. They have received \$12 million, with which they have now engaged or are about to engage 161 new teachers just for the public board in Toronto. It will change the conditions of learning for literacy and numeracy. It will make it more possible to get individualized attention.

Finally, this province is moving forward again with progress for our youngest children, progress that was denied to them for too many years under the previous government.

Mr Duguid: We all know that this is not just a Toronto issue. Parents, educators and students are concerned about ensuring smaller classes in schools right across this province. They want us to do all we can to improve student achievement. Frankly, that starts in the early grades. What steps are school boards across Ontario taking to reduce class sizes in the all-important early grades starting this September?

Hon Mr Kennedy: The members of this assembly may not be aware, but today we have 134,000 students trapped in classes where their individual needs and opportunities can't get attention paid to them the way they should, classes of 26 or larger.

All across the province there are in excess of 1,000 teachers being hired. For example, in the Thames Valley District School Board there are 35 teachers being hired at 38 schools. The Keewatin-Patricia District School Board

is hiring additional teachers. The Bluewater board is hiring 12 teachers. The two boards in Ottawa are hiring 60 teachers.

There is more professional assistance coming forward to help kids be able to learn. We know that if a basic acquisition of literacy doesn't happen by eight years old, then it can be a problem for the rest of the life of that young child.

So help is underway in the province of Ontario. Thanks to the decisions by the finance minister and the Premier of this province, there will be excellence for all students in this province.

1500

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): To the Premier: You tell us that people of Ontario asked for and supported your health tax budget, but in the finance committee testimony yesterday, the Ontario Federation of Labour, through their president, Wayne Samuelson, told us your direction was "politically stupid." Considering that your popularity, at 9%, is falling almost as fast as your promises, would you agree with Mr Samuelson's assessment?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): No.

Mr Barrett: Further to that testimony, the OFL, the Ontario Federation of Labour, testified that the health premium is really a tax. We know that in the legislation itself the two words are used interchangeably. The OFL testified that it's a very regressive tax, disproportionately borne by low- and middle-income people.

Considering that close to half the Ontario budget is spent on health care and half the taxes these people pay to the Ontario government go to fund health, will you follow the OFL advice and fund health care on a progressive basis? If you won't, would you keep your word and give Ontarians a chance to vote on this in a referendum?

Hon Mr McGuinty: It's certainly a remarkable day in this Legislature to have a member of the Conservative Party acting as a champion of the Ontario Federation of Labour. It's interesting to witness this new alliance.

The member mentioned in his first question that this was not good politics. I am going to seize this opportunity to make a very important statement again. This is not about politics; it is about the people of Ontario and doing what is absolutely essential to improve the quality of their health care. And we can't wait. We've got to do two things at the same time: We've got to clean up their financial mess, dig ourselves out of this hole they left behind, and at the same time we've got to make investments that improve the quality of care. I'm talking about shorter waits. I'm talking about more primary care. I'm talking about better nursing-home care. I'm talking about more home care. I'm talking about vaccinations. I'm talking about doing what is best for the people of Ontario, and not us, in terms of our short-term political interests.

ELECTRICITY RESTRUCTURING

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. The big private energy corporations can hardly control their glee over your hydro privatization scheme. In fact, Andrew Kuske, an analyst at UBS investment research, says that Brascan, Cameco and TransCanada are absolutely giddy. Why are they so happy? Well, Kuske says, "a supply-demand climate that favours higher power prices" has a lot to do with it. They're very happy because they know your hydro privatization is going to make them very rich.

The question you have to answer is, how much is it going to add to the average consumer's hydro bill?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): To the Minister of Energy.

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): What the leader of the third party forgot to note is that the Consumers Council of Canada has endorsed our policy. He is alleging, in his own inimitable style, that our policy inevitably will lead to higher prices, and he's opposed to bringing on new supply.

We have a plan for bringing on supply that maintains public ownership of our heritage assets and that will regulate the price at a stable rate going forward.

Groups as diverse as the Ontario Energy Association, the Ontario Clean Air Alliance, the Consumers Council of Canada and the Ontario Water Power Association have all endorsed our government's policy. This policy is going to correct the 40% increase in prices his government brought about in electricity, under the NDP, and it's going to serve the people of this province well going forward, so there will be no more summers like last summer and the summer before.

Mr Hampton: I'm not surprised that the Premier ducked the question, because it was the Premier who, during the election campaign, said he believed in public power, that the private market was dead—another promise by the wayside, just another day for Dalton McGuinty.

The minister says that, oh, the consumers council has recommended his approach. Well, let me tell you, they recommended Jim Wilson's approach and then hydro prices skyrocketed. That means absolutely nothing.

The reality here is that people, on their hydro bill, will pay for a 15% profit, they will pay for the Eleanor Clitheroe-style, out-of-this-world salaries, they will pay the higher interest costs of a private sector borrower. That means at least a 20% increase. We know that the private energy companies can't control their glee over this. When is the Premier going to tell the consumers of Ontario how much it's going to cost them, how much their hydro bill is going to increase?

Hon Mr Duncan: It's good to see the leader of the third party and the Tory energy minister getting along, because they have one thing in common: They both dropped the ball on electricity and left this province in an absolute mess.

Let's talk for a moment about the Howard Hampton credibility gap. Let's talk about it in terms of coal. In his NDP platform, he said he would shut down coal-fired generating stations by 2007, and then, this March, he said it's just not realistic. In terms of supply, what did his government do? He talks about public power. His government cancelled Conawapa, renewable water electricity. Why? Because they said we wouldn't have the demand. In terms of private power, he says in his book, "There will be important roles for the private sector to play in the future of our electricity system, as there always have been." He even advertised it in the flyers for the book.

Premier McGuinty's government is addressing the energy deficiency left by his government and that government in a responsible fashion that will give us adequate supply at stable prices and help ensure the future economic prosperity of this great province.

FAMILY HEALTH TEAMS

Mr Kuldip Kular (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Minister, our government has said that its first priority is to ensure the viability of our province's health care system. As a family physician, I applaud our commitment to our province's health and well-being, but many of my constituents are unsure about how to access the 150 new family health teams that our government will be funding for this coming year. Minister, could you please explain the important role family health teams will play in our communities across the province and how they can access them?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I think the fact that so many communities in our province are interested in family health teams—and I've had interest expressed by many members in the House—is evidence of how badly needed they are. That's why we're so pleased that it has received so much support in our recent budget.

An additional \$600 million will be spent over the next four years on the development of our family health team proposal. This is in addition to existing expenditures related to the delivery of primary health care. It's an essential element of our transformation strategy. It's very consistent with the values of Romanow and the recommendations that he made. What we're looking to do in communities is take a family doc, a nurse, a nurse practitioner, a pharmacist and other health care providers to work together and provide a team approach to individual Ontarians who are seeking out primary care.

The fact of the matter is that for the last number of years, we've been asking our hospitals to do too much through a failure of investments at the community level. Our budget is about five significant community-based investments, and family health teams are but one significant example of that.

Mrs Carol Mitchell (Huron-Bruce): Minister, people in my riding were very pleased to hear that family

health teams will be a priority. As you know, there are doctor shortages, along with a need for quality front-line care, which has been lacking in my rural riding, along with others like it. Many of my constituents are faced with the fear of not having a family doctor. Minister, how will the creation of family health teams help my constituents and those who live in rural areas?

Hon Mr Smitherman: The way they're going to help communities, including those in rural Ontario, is by offering an interdisciplinary approach, which takes a doctor and brings a team of health care providers around the doctor.

The honourable member from Simcoe-Grey is pretending that he's the father or the grandfather of family health teams, but nothing could be further from the truth. Our model is distinct, because it's going to provide communities with the opportunity to tailor a team of health care professionals to meet the population needs that are found in those communities. What I can assure you is that the advantage here is for doctors, who will be able to focus more of their time on providing care and worry less about the administration and the like.

So what I'm pleased to say is that in large communities and small, all across our province, family health teams, 150 of them, will be rolled out over four years and will dramatically enhance the quality and quantity of primary care to be provided in communities.

1510

HEALTH CARE SERVICES

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I have a question for the Premier. I would like to read from a letter I recently received from a constituent:

"Dear Mr Miller,

"I was alarmed to learn that the government has cut chiropractic funding and eye exams from the budget.... I need continued access to chiropractic services to keep my joints from seizing up and I can't do this without chiropractic services that are partly funded by OHIP. What do you expect me to do, go to my family doctor? He can't unseize my joints. Go to emergency? They can't help either."

Premier, can you advise my constituents what they should do now that they can't afford chiropractic services?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): The Minister of Health.

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I think the first point that's worth noting is that it was your government that began with a reduction in the fees that were available, in other words, the amount of money available to Ontarians for these services. They were reduced from \$220 to \$150. That's the maximum amount that any Ontarian could benefit from OHIP coverage. That aggregates out to almost \$100 million.

The fact of the matter remains that it was a difficult decision but a decision based on our recognition that there were other priorities that we felt were essential to

support, priorities like reducing wait times for people who require cancer surgery. The fact of the matter is that after years of neglect, we have to make investments, including \$190 million this year, in expanding our capacity with respect to public health.

The point of the matter is that governments are charged with the responsibility to make priorities. I believe that the investments that we've made, that we've highlighted, are the appropriate investments for this time.

Mr Miller: Premier, not only are you delisting important and cost-efficient health services for the people of the province, but for those in the district of Muskoka, like the constituent I referred to, you're taking away even more. By removing the district of Muskoka from the north, you are taking away their ability to access the northern medical specialist program, the health recruitment tour subsidy, the locum program for specialists and the incentive grants for family physicians. One of the hospitals in Muskoka estimates they could lose \$500,000 to \$600,000 a year as a result of no longer getting access to the northern Ontario heritage fund.

You promised better access to health care, and the people aren't getting it. Why are you reducing access to health care for my constituents? Premier—if I could have a page here, please—I would like to deliver the second batch of 3,000 petitions, bringing it up to 6,000 petitions from my constituents to get Muskoka back in the north.

Hon Mr Smitherman: If we read the honourable member's question back, as we look at Hansard, we've now heard from the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka, who has defined access to health care on the basis of services that are therapeutically beneficial, but not even covered in the Canada Health Act. We as a government have said that, forced with the responsibility to choose priorities, we've chosen our priorities. Our priorities are clear: more home care; better long-term care; primary care reform; vaccinations for our kids; to shorten wait times for people suffering from cancer and in need of cardiac surgeries.

Those are our priorities. Those are medically necessary services as protected by the Canada Health Act. While difficult choices were made, we stand by them because we're investing in the things that the people of his riding desperately need for survival.

AUTISM SERVICES

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a question to the Premier. Today, Clare Lewis said this about autistic children: "I believe it is unconscionable that hundreds of autistic children 'aged out' of the program without ever receiving services, many after waiting for over 18 months." It was and it is unconscionable that even today this is still happening under the Liberal government.

Your government has no plan to ensure that these older children finally get the IBI services that they need; nor has your government ended its discrimination against autistic children over the age of six, who, when they turn six, arbitrarily have their IBI services cut off. Premier,

why does your government continue to discriminate against autistic children over the age of six?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs): To the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): I thank the honourable member for the question, and I'd like to thank the Office of the Ombudsman of Ontario for his report. My ministry has already begun to respond to his recommendations.

One of the points he also made in his report was that the former government may have announced monies for children with autism, but didn't have the plan to implement the programs. We have announced the funding—in fact, we have doubled the funding—and we also have announced the plans. We are on target in educating more IBI therapists so that children do not age out, so that they do get the IBI therapy they need.

Many children were waiting just for the assessment to see if they were eligible for IBI, and sometimes just waiting for the assessment took two years. We are streamlining that approach. They don't have to wait as long for the assessment as well, and we have added \$10 million for children with autism under the age of six for these services.

Ms Martel: The question had to do with this government's discrimination against autistic children over the age of six. I remind the Premier of the promise he made on September 17 to Nancy Morrison, whose son, Sean, is five and has autism. You wrote to her and said, "I also believe that the lack of government-funded IBI treatment for autistic children over six is unfair and discriminatory. The Ontario Liberals support extending autism treatment beyond the age of six."

But today, children who turn six are arbitrarily cut off their IBI treatment under your government, Premier, despite your promise. Many children who turn six and who never got government-funded IBI still will not receive any treatment under your government. You made a very specific promise to parents with autistic children over the age of six. Your discrimination against these children is wrong; it's immoral. When are you and your government finally going to end your discrimination against autistic children over the age of six?

Hon Mrs Bountrogianni: The McGuinty government will support children with autism right from the diagnosis, from preschool age, right through to the high school years. We have increased by \$40 million a year the spending for autism, and we will have the plans to implement those programs by the fall. The working group has recently told me that by the fall every school board will have an ABA therapist attached to it in order to get those kids the proper social skills they need to live in today's world.

CLEANUP OF BROWNFIELDS

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): My question is for the Minister of the Environment. I was encouraged by

today's announcement that our government is putting in place a regulation that will promote the cleanup of brownfields. As you know, brownfields in my riding are a great concern, and indeed across the province. Not only are brownfields eyesores, but the soil that lies beneath them is laden with toxins which make them a safety concern for the people who live around them and vandalism and such.

The Greenwich-Mohawk brownfield site in my riding is a prime example. It is three interconnected sites with a total area of 52 acres and is one of the worst in Brantford. The sites are plagued by squatter businesses, unpaid taxes, unpaid rents, absentee landlords, and liabilities such as chop shops and other dangers that we know exist. Even a tax sale on these sites has proven fruitless, but there are some legitimate operations within.

Part of the reason why these sites remain untouched is that there has been a lack of clarity around brownfield property owners' environmental liability. How will the new regulation overcome this problem?

Hon Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment): I am delighted to have an opportunity to address what I think is a very important issue and also a very important move on the part of this government. We have heard from brownfield site owners. They are concerned about any move to remediate the property that they would be liable for to cover the cost of environmental orders.

What this regulation does is assure them that when they follow the regulations—that is, when they would be able to demonstrate that they have an appropriate cleanup plan, that they are going to engage responsible and qualified site managers—we will then not move forward with provincial orders.

We think that brownfield redevelopment is a means of revitalizing our communities and preventing sprawl on agricultural land as well. These are serviced lots within our communities, and we think this is a very important move that municipalities will welcome.

1520

Mr Levac: I thank the minister for that commitment, and I want to say that while in opposition, when I sat on Bill 56, it was a reminder to the previous government that that was going to be a problem, and they didn't remediate it. I'm awfully glad you did that, because it does make sure that the municipalities move to the next phases that are necessary in brownfield redevelopment.

Cleaning up brownfields is not only an environmental benefit issue; it's not only a health and safety issue. It's also one that makes economic sense. Two levels of government, indeed three levels of government, have been able to take monies from those properties when they were up and running for decades and decades. I see this as an investment in our communities, and what our government is planning to do in the next phase encourages me immensely, particularly those people who are working extremely hard in brownfields across the province.

Lands are currently sitting idle, such as 52 acres containing Greenwich-Mohawk. They become lands of great productivity and opportunity. Minister, can you tell

the House when these regulations will take effect so that our municipalities and the province and federal government could get to work on this project?

Hon Mrs Dombrowsky: The announcement today is our government fulfilling its commitment that was made during the recent budget. The regulation is going to be implemented in two phases. The first phase involves the framework for completing the filing of records of the site condition. That will come into force on October 1 of this year. The second phase will be the filing of the record of site condition to the environmental site registry, and it would be voluntary until it becomes mandatory in 2005. We believe this provides the owners of brownfields with a good deal of notice and flexibility so that they can move forward to redevelop these critical sites.

TRILLIUM FOUNDATION

Mr Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): I'll ask this question to the Premier, because the Minister of Culture is not here. Mr Premier, why did you cut \$5.5 million out of the Trillium Foundation budget?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): To the Minister of Finance.

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): One of the real challenges that we had as we were putting together the budget was to put together a four-year financial plan that would get us out of a terrible debt spiral that we inherited when we were elected last October. Part of that financial plan involves holding the line on expenditures in some 15 ministries right across the government. It allows us to make additional expenditures in health care and to make historic new investments in education, but there are some areas where we simply have had to hold the line, and in other areas we have actually had to cut the level of expenditures. That's all part of running a more efficient and more effective government and one that finally soon will have a balanced budget.

Mr Sterling: Mr Speaker, you will know, and the Legislature knows, the Trillium Foundation was set up by the previous government to compensate charities, non-profit groups, because their ability to raise funds was diminished by the fact that we have charity casinos and other gaming opportunities run by the province and profited from by the province. So they were given \$100 million a year to hand out to various different charities and groups across our province.

The funding decisions are made by unpaid local volunteers who know first-hand who are the groups that are most deserving in their communities. This indeed is a slap in the face to local volunteers who have worked so hard to allocate this money. This is a slap in the face to charitable groups, non-profit groups, that have received this money. In eastern Ontario alone, the Trillium Foundation has supported projects for seniors, youth and many others.

Will you reverse this decision and give back \$100 million to all of these very worthwhile groups across

Ontario because they no longer can have local bingos, lotteries and raffles?

Hon Mr Sorbara: I am overwhelmed at the tone and quality of my friend's question. First of all, he knows full well that the Trillium Foundation continues to be well funded. We are fully aware of the volunteer efforts there.

Mr Sterling: You cut it by \$5.5 million.

Hon Mr Sorbara: He says we cut it by \$5.5 million. Let's compare that to what happened when he and his party were elected in 1995, what they cut: welfare payments, 21%; second-stage housing eliminated in July 1996; fired one third of the Ministry of the Environment staff; slashed the budget by 42%. He was a Minister of the Environment.

I'm sorry to lose my temper, but the fact is that that party left us in financial circumstances that were less than favourable: \$6 billion in the hole. We have made modest cuts—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Thank you, Minister.

Hon Mr Sorbara: —where we felt they were appropriate. The good news is, we will balance our books.

The Deputy Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas many owners of seasonal trailers kept at campgrounds have raised their concerns over the impact on property taxes on seasonal trailers and the unfairness of imposing a new tax on persons who use minimum municipal services;

"Whereas this new tax will discourage business and tourism opportunities in Ontario and will cause many families to give up their vacation trailers altogether;

"Whereas the administration of this tax will require a substantial investment in staff, time and resources across the province of Ontario;

"Whereas some representatives of the recreational vehicle industry, campground providers and trailer owners have suggested an alternative sticker or tag system to establish fees for seasonal trailers;

"Therefore, we the undersigned respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Parliament of Ontario immediately abandon the assessment and taxation of recreational trailers used on a seasonal basis in 2004, and that the government of Ontario consult with all stakeholders regarding the development of a fair and reasonable sticker or tag fee that would apply to recreational trailers used on a seasonal basis."

I affix my name in full support.

Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas recreational trailers kept at parks and campgrounds in Ontario are being assessed by the Municipal Property Assessment Corp (MPAC) and are subject to property taxes; and

"Whereas owners of these trailers are seasonal and occasional residents who contribute to the local tourism economy without requiring significant municipal services; and

"Whereas the added burden of this taxation will make it impossible for many families of modest income to afford their holiday sites at parks and campgrounds;

"Therefore, we the undersigned respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That these seasonal trailers not be subject to retro-active taxation for the year 2003, and that the tax not be imposed in 2004, and that no such tax be introduced without consultation with owners of the trailers and trailer parks, municipal governments, businesses, the tourism sector and other stakeholders."

I have 10 petitions here and I'll affix my name to them.

HEALTH CARE SERVICES

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): Today on the front lawn of Queen's Park there were literally thousands of chiropractors and their patients who presented these petitions to me. As the birthplace of chiropractic is the riding of Durham, I'm presenting them respectfully on their behalf. They read as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Dalton McGuinty Liberal government has broken faith with the people of Ontario by increasing taxes and allowing deficits and adding \$12 billion to the provincial debt during their mandate; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government has brought in a substantial new health care tax while actually reducing some health care services such as chiropractic treatment, eye examinations and physiotherapy; and

"Whereas the new tax-and-spend initiatives threaten the Ontario economy as well as burden the hard-working citizens of Ontario;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reject the 2004-05 Ontario budget presented May 18 and bring in a"—real—"budget that respects the wishes of Ontario citizens by keeping their promise of no"—cuts to health care and no—"increased taxes."

I'm pleased to support and endorse this on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham and present it to Jason, the page.

DISTRICT OF MUSKOKA

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I have thousands more petitions to keep Muskoka part of northern Ontario. They read as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the district of Muskoka is currently designated as part of northern Ontario; and

"Whereas the geography and socio-economic conditions of Muskoka are very similar to the rest of northern Ontario; and

"Whereas the median family income in the district of Muskoka is \$10,000 below the provincial average and \$6,000 below the median family income for greater Sudbury; and

"Whereas removing the district of Muskoka from northern Ontario will adversely affect the hard-working people of Muskoka by restricting access to programs and incentives enjoyed by residents of other northern communities; and

"Whereas the residents of Muskoka should not be confused with those who cottage or vacation in the district; and

"Whereas the federal government of Canada recognizes the district of Muskoka as part of the north; and

"Whereas this is a mean-spirited and politically motivated decision on the part of the McGuinty government;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government maintain the current definition of northern Ontario for the purposes of government policy and program delivery."

I support this petition and affix my signature to it.

1530

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Mr Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): I have in my hand a petition signed by 348 members of the Oakville community. I'm tabling this petition, in which they ask the provincial government to maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Petitions?

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that concerns chiropractic services in Ontario under the Ontario health insurance plan. It reads as follows:

"Re support for chiropractic services in the Ontario health insurance plan;

"Whereas elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic service will no longer be able to access the health care they need; and

"Those with reduced ability to pay—including seniors, low-income families and the working poor—will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments; and

"Elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

"There was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP

coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province."

I affix my signature to this petition as I totally agree with them.

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): This is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Re support for chiropractic services in the Ontario health insurance plan.

"Whereas elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need; and

"Those with reduced ability to pay—including seniors, low-income families and the working poor—will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments; and

"Elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

"There was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province."

I will sign my name to that as well.

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I have a petition as well from the demonstration on the lawn. I have pages and pages of names in regard to chiropractic.

"Whereas over 1.2 million people use chiropractic services every year in the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas those who use chiropractic services consider this an important part of their health care and rely on these services, along with the OHIP funding in order to function; and

"Whereas the elimination or reduction of chiropractic services would be viewed as breaking the promise not to reduce universal access to health care; and

"Whereas by eliminating or reducing OHIP coverage of chiropractic services, where the patient pays part of the cost, will end up costing the government far more in additional physician, emergency department and hospital visits;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Parliament of Ontario does not delist chiropractic services from the Ontario health insurance plan, and that assurance is given that funding for chiropractic services not be reduced or eliminated."

I affix my name in full support.

MOTORCYCLE INSURANCE

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I have a petition from my constituents from Parry Sound-Muskoka to protect Ontario's motorcyclists.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas tens of thousands of responsible motorcyclists are being hit with huge increases in insurance or are being denied coverage because of the type or age of the vehicle they ride; and

"Whereas the premiums for the mandatory insurance coverage for motorcyclists have increased on average over 40% in the past two years; and

"Whereas many responsible riders can no longer afford to insure their motorcycles due to high insurance costs; and

"Whereas sales of motorcycles in Ontario have dropped over 7% year-to-date this year, a figure attributed directly to higher insurance rates; and

"Whereas many businesses and individuals in the motorcycle industry are suffering due to the loss of sales and decreased employment that high insurance rates are causing;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government take steps to make motorcycle insurance more affordable and ensure that motorcyclists are treated fairly and equitably by the insurance industry."

I support this petition and affix my signature to it.

TILLSONBURG DISTRICT MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I have here a petition from my riding. It's signed by in excess of 6,000 people.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Tillsonburg District Memorial Hospital has asked for ministerial consent to make capital changes to its facility to accommodate the placement of a satellite dialysis unit; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has already given approval for the unit and committed operational dollars to it; and

"Whereas the community has already raised the funds for the equipment needed;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care give his final approval of the capital request change from the Tillsonburg District Memorial Hospital immediately, so those who are in need of these life-sustaining dialysis services can receive them locally, thereby enjoying a better quality of life without further delay."

Again, I affix my signature as I totally agree with this petition.

SEAT BELTS

Ms Laurel C. Broten (Etobicoke-Lakeshore): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas most school buses and almost all tour buses operating within the province of Ontario are not equipped with seat belts for the safety of the passengers; and

"Whereas this situation poses a real danger to all said passengers; and

"Whereas, as the result of an accident which occurred on July 29, 2003, on Highway 401 in the vicinity of the Pearson International Airport, just west of the municipality of Metropolitan Toronto, one woman died of her injuries and 41 other passengers of a tour bus, all senior citizens, were seriously injured; and

"Whereas we value the lives of all passengers on said vehicles; and

"Whereas the fatality and some of the other injuries to the rest of the passengers might not have occurred if the said vehicle had been equipped with seat belts;

"We, the undersigned, petition the province of Ontario Legislative Assembly to enact legislation requiring it to be mandatory for all school buses, no matter what size, and all tour buses, no matter what size, operating in the province of Ontario to be equipped with safety seat belts."

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Mr John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke):

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Re support for chiropractic services in Ontario health insurance plan:

"Whereas elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic services will no longer be able to access the health care they need;

"Those with reduced ability to pay—including seniors, low-income families and the working poor—will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments;

"Elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

"There was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province."

I agree with this petition and affix my name to it.

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'd like to present these on behalf of some residents and chiropractors. It says:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Re support for chiropractic services in Ontario health insurance plan;

"Whereas elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need; and

"Whereas those with reduced ability to pay—including seniors, low-income families and the working poor—

will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments; and

"Whereas elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to the government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

"Whereas there was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province."

I'm pleased to sign my name to that.

CORMORANT POPULATION

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas cormorant populations in the Great Lakes basin have increased to over 450,000 birds over the past several years, are continuing to grow, and are significantly depleting fish populations; and

"Whereas numerous scientific studies have clearly shown the serious negative impact on fish stocks and freshwater habitats; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Natural Resources continues to study the impact of cormorants and possible management strategies; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Natural Resources has committed to experimental control of cormorants at specific sites;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the government of Ontario and the Ministry of Natural Resources to immediately begin to significantly reduce cormorant populations in areas where they are having a demonstrably negative impact on local fisheries through managed culls."

I affix my name in full support.

1540

ORDERS OF THE DAY

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS AMENDMENT ACT (HOURS OF WORK AND OTHER MATTERS), 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES NORMES D'EMPLOI (HEURES DE TRAVAIL ET AUTRES QUESTIONS)

Resuming the debate adjourned on June 9, 2004, on the motion for second reading of Bill 63, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 with respect to hours of work and certain other matters / Projet de loi

63, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi en ce qui concerne les heures de travail et d'autres questions.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr John Milloy (Kitchener Centre): It's a pleasure to stand here in the House today and speak on Bill 63, an important piece of legislation. I'd like to notify the House at the outset that I'll be sharing my time with my colleague from Etobicoke North.

As you know, Bill 63 is an important piece of labour legislation. It deals with an end to the 60-hour workweek. At the same time, it contains provisions to increase awareness of workplace rights for labourers and also provides for more rigorous enforcement of employment standards.

I'd like to spend a few minutes this afternoon talking about each of those provisions, but before I do that, I thought I'd take a few minutes to talk about what this act symbolizes. I think, if you see it, especially within the context of other government policies and programs that we put forth, what it symbolizes is balance and respect. When all of us have approached many of the social issues and problems here in our province, those have been the two key watchwords of this government. When I make reference to our party policy, I also want to point out that Bill 63 is an election commitment. It's yet another way in which we've come forward. We promised something in the election—I heard about this at the doors—ending the 60-hour workweek, and we brought it forward. But as I said, it's about balance and respect.

It's about balance because I think our whole approach to labour issues is refreshing. A few weeks ago, I had an opportunity to speak on a companion piece of legislation, Bill 56, which dealt with compassionate leave. At that point, I spoke about a speech that the Minister of Labour had made in my region several months ago. During that speech, he talked a bit about the history of government labour relations over the past number of years in this province. As we look back to when our colleagues in the New Democratic Party were in power, you had a government which was clearly pro-labour. Then we moved on to the Progressive Conservative Party. When they were in power, they openly identified themselves as being pro-business.

The message that the Minister of Labour brought when he came to my area and addressed the labour organization was that we were going to stop looking through that lens. We weren't going to start thinking about what's best for unions; we weren't going to start thinking about what's best for business; we were going to start thinking about what was right for both sides to create the kind of prosperous economy and prosperous community that we need. He delivered that message. It was a labour audience that he was speaking to and he by no means pandered to them in any way. Instead, he spoke about government's role as being an honest broker between business and labour; about government's role in bringing both sides to the table to work out the types of

agreements and the types of compromises that are needed for us both to succeed. It's just as much in the interest of labour that business succeeds as it is in the interest of business that labour succeeds.

As I pointed out in my speech at that time, when the minister concluded his remarks, every single person in the room—and there were some pretty experienced, savvy union leaders—got to their feet and gave the minister a round of applause because he had brought forward a rather refreshing view that had not been seen in this province for many, many years.

What this bill does is it reflects it. It reflects the balance. It looks through the lens of what's right, because, on the one hand, it says to workers, "You have the right to refuse to work over 48 hours," but at the same time, it says to businesses, "You can ask your workers to work those hours, and here is the process by which they can apply for it, a process that is agreeable to both sides."

The other side of the coin, as I mentioned, was the whole issue of respect. By coming forward with a bill such as this, by removing the 60-hour workweek, we're showing respect for working men and women in this province. It's interesting. I'm a novice, as you know. I was only elected a few months ago. I've learned that with a lot of the problems, a lot of the frictions that existed with the last government, yes, many of them had to do with the funding cuts, but they also had to do with not respecting individuals. Within our community, we have many people who contribute. It's not just the owner of the large business, it's not just the factory owner who employs hundreds of people; it's also the labourer on the floor, who may not speak or understand English as well as or be as sophisticated as the owner, but they contribute. It's about respecting them, about respecting the fact that workers in this province make an incredible contribution.

The rights of labour is not a particularly sexy issue, but it's an important issue. I recently attended a conference. It was called Catholics in Public Life. It was a very interesting conference. It was put on at St Jerome's University, just outside my riding. It's associated with the University of Waterloo. There were a number of Catholics who sat around and discussed the whole issue of morality and ethics and public life, and as you probably guessed, they got on to all the usual social questions.

Then I put up my hand and said, "You know, there's more than sort of these two or three hot-button issues to morality and ethics in public life." I had knocked on hundreds of doors during the election, and no one said to me, "I have a strong religious background, and I want to vote for a government that believes in the rights of workers, that believes in the rights of the poor." Yet in many ways that message permeates all religions, and it's part of the whole basis of public morality. So to come forward with a bill like this that shows respect for working men and women is, I think, showing not only balance, but a certain ethic toward the people of Ontario.

There's a more practical side to it, too. The whole issue of people working overtime, of being forced—there's nothing wrong with working overtime. This bill is not meant to take away that opportunity for people. But what it is meant to do is give people the right to say no. The fact is that the direct cost of absenteeism—and that's what often happens when you force workers to go on and on—in Canadian workplaces, according to some studies, has been shown to be between \$3 billion and \$5 billion per year.

But it's not only the cost in dollar terms. One recent measurement suggested that over 466,000 Ontario employees worked 50 or more hours in a week in 2003, but the figure could be higher. Think of the stress that's putting on people's personal lives. Think of the stress that's putting on their families. Think of the stress that's putting on their physical well-being. We often talk about the health care system, how so much of our health care is aimed at the sick, not at preventing the causes of sickness. Forcing individuals into a working situation where they have to work long hours, and they don't feel they can refuse their boss because there's no oversight, there are no tools, in a sense is putting them under tremendous stress, which could affect them in all aspects of their life.

How does this bill work? What the bill does is that, first of all, it asks that employers explain to employees what their rights are under the law. We have an initiative, a strategy by the Ministry of Labour, whereby employees who don't speak English, who are not familiar with this system, will be provided with the type of information, the type of education so that they're going to know their rights. Then the employee and the employer agree that that employee is going to work the required amount of overtime, over 48 hours a week. That has to then be filed with the Ministry of Labour, which in turn will provide the proper oversight to make sure the employee is doing it voluntarily, that the employee knows their rights and that they're moving forward.

1550

This is certainly not a bill that's anti-business. It allows for a process, and I should point this out, where the employer can apply for this on-line or by fax. There are no fees associated with it. It's something that, as I said—I see the Minister of Labour is entering the room.

As mentioned earlier in his speech, we're playing the honest broker. We're taking employees who may want to work overtime hours, we're taking employers who are interested in asking their employees to work those hours, and we're sitting down at the table and coming out with a fair process, a process that respects the employees and their rights to refuse. It makes sure they don't have that stress, and fear, quite frankly, that their employer is going to somehow push them, that their employer might fire them if they don't work those long hours. It's about balance. It's about respect. It's not about being pro-union or pro-labour. It's about being pro-Ontarian.

In conclusion, I want to say that I think this is an excellent bill. It's a bill that has been asked for. It was certainly asked for during the election. It removes an

impediment the previous government brought forward that I think was, in a sense, perhaps a bit mean-spirited. It certainly did not serve any purpose in trying to build better relationships with the working men and women of Ontario. I'm pleased to support this bill, which I think is going to make a positive difference to our province.

Mr Shafiq Qaadri (Etobicoke North): First of all, as a member of the government caucus, as a member of the McGuinty government, it's a privilege, an honour and, I must say, it's high time that we as a government and the Legislature of Ontario actually came up with a bill such as this one, Bill 63, on the Employment Standards Act.

I'd like to salute the Honourable Christopher Bentley, the Minister of Labour, for bringing forth this and other improvements to the general labour scene in Ontario. Whether it's dealing with the Employment Standards Act and letting employers and the employed know their full rights, whether it's raising the minimum wage or a host of other initiatives, we'd like to commend the minister and his ministry.

This bill is particularly about balance between management and labour, an aspect of having respect for labour and the fundamental protection of their rights; for example, a worker's right to choose. I would also like to say, with respect, that the previous regime, the previous government, in their move in 2001 to create this 60-hour workweek—it was just another measure, another sign, another echo of the crony capitalism that was being practised by the previous regime. Essentially it was a gift to corporations, a gift to, let's say, the landed gentry. It was a gift to the employers, and that's why we in this government are moving to help to further protect the most vulnerable.

With that, I'd like to share with this House and the people of Ontario an extended quotation from an individual who understood labour relations, who understood deeply the dignity of men and women and their place in society, but who understood the constant need for vigilance and balance that ultimately comes from laws, and that is the former President of the United States, one Abraham Lincoln, who said, "Labour is prior to, and independent of, capital. Capital is only the fruit of labour, and could never have existed if labour had not first existed. Labour is the superior of capital, and deserves much the higher consideration. Capital has its rights, which are as worthy of protection," but labour predominates.

What that particular quotation highlights, from a man who is eminently qualified and lived those words, is the respect that we as legislators must extend to both parties, to both sectors.

Why is the government actually introducing this bill? We made a commitment to end the 60-hour workweek, which was introduced, as I mentioned earlier, by the previous government. We want to restore a worker's right to choose whether to actually work more than 48 hours in a week or not, and it's in this manner that we will ensure the prosperity and well-being of our province.

One of the things we know here in the government is that Ontario's hard-working employees deserve to be able to balance rewarding work lives, as well as meaningful and healthy personal lives. So, for example, as a result of the previous government's legislation, some employees have been essentially too worried about their jobs to actually say no to an employer's request to work up to 60 hours a week.

It is kind of a glaring deficiency, I would say, in the current labour relations regime that there is no government oversight to actually support an employee's choice. That is a fundamental deficiency that we are working to correct. For example, one of the fundamental protections that has existed for decades within the Ministry of Labour, this idea of approving of a workweek of 48 hours, was actually removed by the previous regime. Again, that was an echo of the crony capitalism that was being practised in this and many other sectors, as you'll appreciate. This is not right. This was not fair, and this is actually what we're attempting to correct.

One of the things that's especially important is that if a worker feels that he or she has actually been coerced into working those long hours—that they did not want to work, for a variety of reasons—until this legislation has come forth, there has been essentially no recourse, no remedy, no ability for them to seek correction of this state of affairs. That's why we, as the government, can and must fulfill this wish of Ontarians to have the fairest workplaces in the world.

Specifically, what exactly is in Bill 63? First of all, this bill would restore protection for vulnerable workers that has existed for decades, but it also does so in a way that is fair and respects the need of business to compete effectively with a profit motive in today's economy. It would provide government oversight by requiring employers to actually apply to the Ministry of Labour to have employees work more than 48 hours in a week. Employers would also have to have the written agreement—not implied, not simply gestured, but actually the written agreement—of employees to work those excess hours.

This bill, therefore, deals with the freedom of choice around averaging hours of work for overtime purposes. In essence, we are restoring the requirement that ministry approval be obtained for averaging of any overtime, a protection that was removed in the Employment Standards Act, 2000, by the previous regime. We must ensure, therefore, that employees are agreeing to overtime averaging for the right reasons, without undue pressure from their employer.

What are some of the benefits that will flow to employees with this bill? It would restore that protection, but it would also require that, before they actually sign any agreement, employees be provided with an information sheet produced by the Ministry of Labour that would inform them of their right to refuse any hours over 48 hours per week, and also—and this is very key—of their right not to face any kind of retribution, punishment or reprisal should they choose to not do so, to not follow

their employer's bidding. They would be able to freely choose to work those excess hours because the government, for the first time since 2000, would actually be able to provide oversight.

One of the things that's very important is that we as a government will provide workers with information on these rights and responsibilities through this Employment Standards Act, not only in Canada's official languages, English and French, but also in a number of other languages which the workplaces require, as a multicultural mosaic that certainly Toronto and Ontario has become.

Why is this especially important? I can tell you that from my own riding, from the riding of Etobicoke North—and we've raised this issue with the Minister of Labour and his ministry directly—there are, unfortunately, a number of individuals, often new Canadians, who may not be entirely fluent in English or French, who may not be entirely fluent with the laws of the land and their own particular rights and privileges.

Unfortunately, there have been a number of instances in which unscrupulous employers have sought to essentially exploit the workers' deficiency in language or their familiarity with the Canadian milieu, with the Canadian scene. I'm very proud of the fact that our government is taking the initiative not only to better inform all Ontarians of their rights and responsibilities in, of course, the usual standard English and French but also in other languages as well.

1600

What are some of the benefits to employers? There are a number. Part of this bill is actually a comprehensive strategy about real changes to employment standards and practices, and this of course will benefit both parties. It would ensure that Ontario businesses have the necessary flexibility to compete nationally as well as internationally. The legislation would therefore level the playing field for all employers.

In essence, this bill is about balance, respect for labour, respect for fundamental protections of rights and privileges on both sides, and really restoring the worker's right to choose. In particular, it is a remedy, a righting of the previous regime's practice of Tory crony capitalism, particularly with a view to our most vulnerable, our workers who are, let's say, of new Canadian descent.

Thank you for this opportunity to support the Employment Standards Amendment Act, Bill 63.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Joseph N. Tascona): Questions and comments?

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): In a few minutes I'll be speaking as part of our caucus's leadoff on this legislation. I'd like to say a few words on the comments made by the member from Kitchener Centre and the member from Etobicoke North. I know they're trying to make this bill seem like it's a wonderful piece of legislation and they're getting away from "Tory crony capitalism," as I think I just heard the member from Etobicoke North say. But quite frankly, I've talked to quite a few people about this bill and tried to get some interest generated in it. You know what? Nobody cares—

that's the bottom line—as they didn't care about our bill bringing in the 60-hour workweek. No one cared about that either. I had one call in four years on it. One person I met at a fair brought it up. That's all I heard on it. And I've heard nothing about this particular piece of legislation since you introduced it. So I know you need something sort of warm and fuzzy to talk about to the people of Ontario, but this is not it. People really don't care about this.

I talked to one of the largest employers in my riding. I made a quick call to the human resources manager and asked how it was going to affect them. He says it's just more bureaucratic; we've just added more bureaucracy. He says, "We know we have to put up with that. It's a Liberal government. We know they're going to be more bureaucratic, so why wouldn't we expect that?" He said, "It's no big deal. It's just bureaucratic."

I'll be able to say a few more words in a couple of minutes and look forward to this wonderful debate on this very exciting legislation.

Ms Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): I listened with rapt attention to the members for Kitchener Centre and Etobicoke North talking about this particular piece of legislation that's been tabled, and I can't quite fathom where they're coming from. I've taken my time to look through it. In fact, I've had some experience in this, having done some work in legal clinics in one of my past lives, dealing with employment standards issues, as a matter of fact. To my shock and dismay, I see that there is no balancing of any playing field whatsoever in this legislation.

I would have to agree with the previous speaker in regard to the fact that it looks like a matter of simply putting some more rules around things like averaging of hours of work for overtime purposes over several weeks, which is a problem that the previous government put in place and that still continues to be in this act. It looks like there's no redress or no recourse really for workers who will be put under duress to work longer hours than they want to be working. Quite frankly, the power remains with the employer, not with the employee. I don't see anything in here that really gives any recourse to workers who do not want to work these hours. Quite frankly, the upper hand is with the employer, no matter what. Perhaps there are some rules, some regulations, some words around how a worker might be able to determine they don't want to work these hours, but nothing really, I think, that has any real teeth in it in regard to giving workers the right to refuse extra work. The bottom line is, if you want the job, you're going to have to work the hours.

I can remember the days when we were talking about hours of work that were more appropriate to a decent quality of life for people living in this province. Obviously, the government that is in power now is not interested in making those kinds of changes, and that really is a true shame, because true Employment Standards Act amendments need to come forward so people in this province

have a decent quality of life and have a balance in the workplace to be able to refuse excessive hours of work.

Mr John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex): We just heard from the opposition that we're absolutely bang-on with this bill, because what we're talking about is restoring the balance between the employer and the employee. And what we heard from the opposition, approaching two different parts of the spectrum on this, is that we got it all wrong on both sides. That is the greatest testament that we must be restoring the balance that has to be there. Government's role is being the referee.

As a business person, I want you to know that I've always felt that you're only as good as the people you hire. I think most people in business understand that, that the people who work for them are their greatest resource. I know I believe that. But there are employers—and I agree with the member for Hamilton East—who abuse their employees, and so it is the role of government, the righteous role of government, to be that referee. That's why there must be a balanced, level playing field. The member for Hamilton East is correct: The employer who writes the cheque does have an inordinate amount of power. But if it's a far-sighted business, they understand that the workers are a resource to be invested in and not a resource to be depleted.

One of the reasons I support the bill is the fact that each and every employee in this province from now on will have to receive a document, produced by the Ministry of Labour, outlining their rights as employees. There are so many people in our province who are unaware of their rights under the Employment Standards Act. I think this is a forward-thinking move, and I would hope that both opposition parties would agree with us, that it is necessary. I can't understand how anybody would be opposed to that.

The other part, for the referee, is to actually have enforcement. I've learned from the minister, who's a great Minister of Labour, that the previous government was very weak on enforcement, and I'm so glad we're strengthening that.

Mr Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): I want to take this opportunity to congratulate the speakers today, both the member for Kitchener Centre and the member for Etobicoke North, for their well-thought-out words regarding this legislation.

When I first heard this legislation was coming forward a few years ago, I was somewhat surprised, because I thought we had made a number of improvements over the past century, or past several centuries, in terms of workers' rights. It wasn't too long ago that we had people working who were under the age of 16; we had people working in unsafe conditions; we had people working in all sorts of situations which were dangerous to employees. I can think about what happened about 40 or 50 years ago in the York Mills and Yonge Street area where a group of immigrants were trapped under a tunnel. They were left there for several days, and a few of them ended up dying. As a result, I think it was the Conservative

government at the time that brought in legislation, to their credit, to protect workers so that such situations could not occur in the future.

This legislation today addresses another right that workers have, and that is that their work hours should be limited. It's protecting workers so that the 60-hour workweek does not exist. It's actually going forward one step and not going backwards. I would imagine that as we evolve, and as we see this government evolve over the next several years, we're going to see a number of pieces of legislation that would protect workers' rights and also allow the private sector businesses to thrive and work effectively.

I fully support this legislation. I think the speakers thrashed out the main concerns addressed in this legislation, and I look forward to it being approved and put into effect.

1610

The Acting Speaker: Response?

Mr Milloy: I'd like to thank members for Simcoe North, Hamilton East, Perth-Middlesex and Scarborough Southwest for their responses. I've got to tell you, I think that the member from Simcoe North in particular very much exemplified what I said in my speech, that unfortunately, these very, very important issues just aren't the flavour of the day. They're not sexy. He was dismissive about the rights of workers in this province, and I'm concerned about that. I'm concerned that more and more, our elected officials are starting to lose sight of the reality.

My colleague from Etobicoke North spoke very passionately about individuals in his riding who may not understand English or French, who come from different legal regimes, who find themselves in a situation where they are being asked to work overtime, and although they might somehow realize that technically they could refuse, deep down they fear for their jobs. They fear for their future. They fear for their families. So they end up having to work hour after hour after hour, but, "We don't care." We hear from the member from Simcoe North: "Oh, who cares? It's not a big deal. It's not a big deal for workers who are out there, who are surviving on very modest wages." Thank goodness we brought up the minimum wage.

I care about them. The people of the Liberal Party—and you heard it from my two colleagues who spoke—care about them. We care about the rights of workers. We care about protecting the less fortunate, who don't have the sophistication and perhaps the language skills that they need, under the 60-hour workweek, to fight it. We support their right to say whether they want to work overtime or not. That's what this bill is about. It reflects Liberal principles. It reflects principles that, thank goodness, have been finally brought to this Legislature, and I'm quite frankly upset that the Conservative Party says it's a nothing bill. For us, it's a very important bill.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Simcoe North.

Mr Dunlop: Mr Speaker, we'll now be doing our leadoff time that we had deferred before, and I'll be sharing it with the member for Durham, the member for Kitchener-Waterloo, who, of course, is a former Minister of Labour, the member for Parry Sound-Muskoka, and the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke.

I'd like to say just how disappointed I was with the response just in the last couple of minutes from the member for Kitchener Centre, when he said I was being dismissive. The fact of the matter is, when I made my earlier comments, I talked based on the kinds of concerns I have in my riding. I always judge a bill by the type of response I have. I have not had one call on Bill 63, not from anybody. So I've had to make calls to business people. I've had to make calls to large employers and small employers. No one has responded to this bill. No one has sent me a letter, an e-mail or a fax, or asked for an appointment.

As I said earlier—and that's what he was referring to as being dismissive—when I said it was a nothing bill, in the riding of Simcoe North, with the 60-hour workweek legislation under the Employment Standards Act, I had only received one complaint. That was a verbal complaint at a fall fair about the 60-hour workweek, and that was from a gentleman whose wife actually worked at one of the Wal-Mart stores. I believe maybe it was the Wal-Mart store in Midland. So the problem I have is that, although I'm going to go over the bill summary, we really haven't had a lot of concerns and a lot of complaints.

Now, I have to say that in my riding of Simcoe North, we have a very diverse economy. We have a lot of agriculture. We have a lot of construction. We have organizations like the casino, a lot of civil service with the Ontario government, with the correctional centre, with the mental health centre, with the only regional centre with the Ontario Provincial Police Association and the general headquarters of the OPP. So maybe it's not a big issue in the riding of Simcoe North, and maybe this is a very important issue in other parts of our province. I have to say upfront that, as I said earlier, it hasn't been a concern in my riding, but it may very well be in other ridings, particularly—I think he mentioned something about where there's a high immigration level in a particular part of a riding.

What I have heard from the small business people when I made some specific calls over the last few days before we made any comments on this bill, I have been told by employers that the bill was very bureaucratic, and that's really the only difference, because it still allows people to do basically the same things as the previous legislation had before.

I want to read into the record our response on Bill 63, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act with respect to hours of work and certain other matters. That is, of course, referred to as the hours of work act, Bill 63. My understanding from our briefings and from going over the bill is that currently approval from the director of employment standards is required only if the hours in

the workweek would exceed 60. This bill would prohibit employers from requiring or permitting employees to work more than 48 hours in a workweek unless the employees have agreed to it in writing and the employer has been issued an approval by the director of employment standards.

If an employer has applied for an approval and the director has not yet made a decision on the application, employees may begin working the additional hours, up to a maximum of 60 hours in a week, 30 days after the application has been made. The background of this is fairly clear. The bill really does very little to change the relationship between the employer and the employee in relation to hours worked. The Liberals advertised this as bringing an end to a 60-hour workweek. This was somehow imposed by the previous government. In fact, the 60 hours remain, but now, to achieve these hours, the employer must comply with regulatory requirements. That's what I refer to when I talk about the bureaucracy it has added to business. I know that this particular government has no concern about the small business people. They're more concerned about how they can raise taxes and monies from small business people to support some of their bureaucratic spending.

The substance of the bill: Section 1 in Bill 63 amends section 2 of the Employment Standards Act and requires a poster containing information about this bill to be placed in a very prominent place in the workplace. That I can understand.

Section 2 amends section 15 of the act, which deals with the retention of hours-of-work agreements by the employer.

Section 4 amends section 17 of the act and provides for the situation where an approval to go beyond 48 hours has been sought and not received. Workers are allowed to work the increased hours for 30 days. That's our understanding of it.

Clause 17(1)(b) sets out the 48-hour requirement.

Subsection 17(4) sets out the criteria which will allow for a 60-hour workweek even if approval from the ministry is not received within a 30-day period after the application.

Section 17.1 provides the mechanism for the employer to apply to the director for approval, allowing some or all employees to work a 60-hour week. So he's still allowed to do it. It can be made by electronic means. The application is to be posted in the workplace.

In subsection 17.1(8), the director has the option to grant or refuse the application, taking into consideration the past performance of the employer, the health and safety of employees, and other relevant matters.

In subsection 17.1(9), the approval applies to new employees as well as all existing employees. Of course, that's just some housekeeping work.

In subsection 17.1(11), the approval is posted in the workplace.

In subsections 17.1(15), (16) and (17), the approval may be subject to conditions or it may be revoked.

In subsections 17.1(19) and (20), the application may be refused, with no need to provide a reason.

In 17.3, the director may delegate his or her powers.

Section 5—and again, I'm going back to our summary of this particular piece of legislation—amends section 21 of the act and requires the director to publish a manual setting out the rights and obligations of employers and employees.

Sections 6 and 7 amend section 22 of the act and allow employers and employees to continue to make written agreements to average hours of work for overtime pay purposes, but employers are still required to obtain approval for averaging. Currently, approval is only needed if averaging exceeds four weeks. Averaging can take place for two weeks while awaiting approval. The existing averaging agreements are valid, but are subject to a requirement to obtain an approval. The approvals may be revoked on reasonable notice, or applications may be rejected. There is no requirement to provide reasons.

1620

Section 9 amends subsection 138.1(1). It allows a director to publish the name of a person who is convicted of an offence under this act. That's standard housekeeping work as well.

Section 11 states that the bill comes into force on January 1 of next year. So we'll have lots of time for the government and the Ministry of Labour to implement this particular piece of legislation if it's passed before the end of this session, or possibly sometime in the next session. I don't think the government is counting on this bill going through right now. We're not going to support this bill, but we're not going to put up a large fight over it either. They are the government, they won the election and they can do what they want.

I want to add some critical comments to the bill. The bill adds a paper burden to an employer and does nothing to help employees. That's what I've been hearing from the people I've called in the last couple of days when I asked them what they thought of this bill. They said it's nothing more than bureaucracy and a lot more paperwork is required. It does not reduce the workweek. That's what it's all about. You can still go ahead and do what you want. It militates against flexibility in industry and certainly is not good for small businesses in our province.

What will be the increased bureaucratic cost of implementing this scheme? There's nothing wrong with the system established by our government. The bill adds another form to be filled out, just another form. Employees want flexible hours and some want to work overtime. The government has put a roadblock in the way. The bill is reform without meaning or purpose. Who will enforce this? More bureaucrats. They'll need more staff. The bill contains no requirement to give reasons if the employer's request is rejected. There is also no appeal mechanism and that, of course, is wrong as well.

What's important, as we go through this legislation and this debate on Bill 63, is the fact that the government is trying to force through some little pieces of legislation. As the member from Kitchener Centre said earlier—he tried to think I dismissed this bill. But the fact of the

matter is, what's most important to the working family in Ontario today, what they're most concerned about—I told you a little earlier that my riding is very diverse. I talked to people in the agriculture community, people who work at casinos, in all different sectors of society, many in construction, because we're having a lot of building up in our part of the province and a lot of people work on cottages. Do you know what they're really concerned about? They're not worried about Mr Bentley's Bill 63 and the 60-hour workweek and how we're going to appeal it. They're worried about the health care premium. That's what they're saying.

I went outside today and listened to the chiropractors. I'm telling you, everyone should have seen that today. I'm guessing close to a thousand people showed up in a rainstorm to talk about the delisting of the chiropractic services. I talked to almost all the chiropractors from the riding of Simcoe North, because there were many out there. Not one of the chiropractors talked about Bill 63. Bill 63 wasn't an issue with them. They weren't concerned about somebody working 60 hours a week and how it affected their back or their legs. They were concerned about the delisting of the services. They were concerned about the government ramming through this bill tonight.

Interjection: Ramming it through.

Mr Dunlop: Ramming it through.

As I said today to the media and to the people at the chiropractic demonstration—I shouldn't call it a demonstration, because chiropractors don't demonstrate; they're too busy to be down here. They were trying to draw attention—not one person was there from the government.

We had a couple of McGuinty spies. I know the guys who work in the Premier's office. They were out there with their little cell phones, sending messages back to the cabinet room about what these guys were saying. But it was really nice, because the spokesperson for the chiropractors today was Curt Harnett, a medallist in the Olympic Games. He spoke on behalf of the chiropractors and even acted as the emcee. I've seen Curt at other occasions and have had the chance to meet him a few times. Of course, he sent the message home loud and clear, and it was all about the health care premium and how the government will not listen. If there's anything the government can do for employees in this province, if there's anything they can do for people who are concerned about a 60-hour workweek or a 30-hour workweek or a 48-hour workweek, it's to get rid of this health care premium. It's the most abusive tax we've seen in decades in the province of Ontario.

The fact that we're delisting services—I was interested today to think who's going to make all the announcements on government projects from now on. I know that the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal was planning on doing sewer and water projects, but now I think it's going to be done by the Minister of Health. I believe that's who will be doing it, because under this health care premium, it will be the Minister of Health who will be doing this.

As we go along here, this has become a real issue, because we've been led down the garden path in this particular budget. To think that never before in its history has a government tried to sneak something in this way. They've tried to sneak in sewer and water projects. They're trying to confuse everybody in the province. They're trying to confuse all the different ministries with a health care premium that includes all types of different projects from different ministries. So in the end, you confuse the whole issue.

Are people concerned about the 60-hour workweek today? I don't think so. When this bill receives third reading, even if it passes before the end of this session, I think people are not going to be worried about this. There might be a handful here and there. There might be a few people. The minister's office will line up a few people to make some positive comments about it. They'll talk about the former PC draconian legislation and all these sorts of things they like to do and they like to spin.

But I think what is really important is the fact that the people who are involved in construction jobs who do like to put in long hours and get lots of work because the winters in Ontario and Canada are not quite as—it's not like working in California. You don't have the conditions in the winter to do a lot of construction work outside, so you don't get the ability to work in the winter months. I don't think they care about this. They want to be able to work as many hours as possible, sock away the money for the winter months. That's what they're most concerned about. And I think they're most concerned today about the health care premium.

Of course, we're hearing over and over again as we carry through this legislation and every other piece of legislation—and again, we'll be debating this tonight when we talk about the Budget Measures Act. When we finish debate and finally vote on this draconian piece of legislation, tomorrow the people in Ontario will continue to not worry about a 60-hour workweek; they'll be concerned about the health care premium and Greg Sorbara and Dalton McGuinty's budget. It's been a huge step backward for the citizens of our province.

Mr Speaker, I said earlier I was going to share some time with some of my colleagues. Mr O'Toole, are you ready at any time?

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): Yes, absolutely.

Mr Dunlop: I just want to make sure. He's very shy, as you know, Mr Speaker. It's not often he gets a chance to say something in this House, so when he does, we want to prepare him for his ability to stand up and discuss. I do hope he'll acknowledge some of the people in his riding, because he never seems to do that either, and makes sure he talks to people about the construction workers and construction companies and all these folks who are putting in these long hours and are so in favour of this particular piece of legislation.

With that, Mr Speaker, I'm happy to sit down, and I'll turn it over to my colleague the member from Durham, who will carry on in this one-hour leadoff time.

Mr O'Toole: It's a pleasure to rise this afternoon to speak on Bill 63. Just to bring a bit of focus to my

comments over the next hour, I would only say that, first of all, it's important to note that the Speaker today, the member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford, is actually a labour lawyer. He can listen to this whole debate rather objectively. I don't think he's practising right at this moment, but I know he stays current on the issues. Of course, one of the important issues that he'd be dealing with on a fairly regular basis in his informal consultations, shall we call them, would be the Employment Standards Act. I have to draw that to the attention of the members who are listening here. There are other members here, I know, with a background, and some of them happen to be on the government side.

1630

When I was first elected in 1995—I have time to unravel this great mystery, the journey of life sort of thing—I was fortunate to have worked for General Motors for 31 years. In that time, I spent some time in personnel and labour relations, but mostly I worked in a production environment, and I spent some time working in the systems environment as well.

I was struck by the importance of having rules in the workplace. Quite often at General Motors—the CAW was one of the main partners when I was a supervisor in the plant, a general supervisor, and the various positions I held there as an employee. I was an employee too and there were conditions of employment for me, as well as for all the persons who worked with me. I soon learned that it was a team effort and that there are sets of rules. It's important to note that any legislation that attempts to usurp those collective agreement rules would be a regressive step. I'm pleased to say that in my cursory review, Bill 63 doesn't override collective agreements, although it does provide some unnecessary duplication and red tape.

I represent the riding of Durham. It's a wonderful riding. It's part of Oshawa. But I might say that, just visualizing my riding, I'm so proud to represent the riding. Tomorrow I'm attending the long-awaited, many times announced cancer treatment centre; they're having the actual official opening. It represents a huge construction project, along with the redevelopment of the Lakeridge Oshawa site, a \$400-million construction project. It's sort of in the heart of Oshawa.

There again, this is a construction project that has timelines. We have cancer waiting lists in Ontario. So to get to the importance of how that relates to this bill, it's important to recognize that there are projects, Mr Speaker—the Speaker doesn't seem to be paying attention at the moment. It's important that we recognize there are timelines on these projects. Often in construction projects with pressing timelines and seasons and bad weather—it rains and there's nothing they can do; the next day they have two days of sun and they try to make hay when the sun shines—they need flexibility in some sectors. Let's just leave it at that. I think the viewer today understands that and I think that's important.

If I drive up Simcoe Street in north Oshawa into my riding, the north part, there's one of the largest con-

struction projects in all of Canada: the building of the newest university in Canada, the University of Ontario Institute of Technology. There's some discussion on the project, but I am confident that the leadership there—Gary Polonsky is the president of the university. I was there about a week ago at the commencement—

Interjection.

Mr O'Toole: Absolutely, and the board worked so hard. The community supported it and raised money. This project is one of the largest construction projects. They're building student residences, they're building faculty space, and they're building teaching and learning space. They're trying to stay on time and on budget, and I'm sure under the wise leadership of Gary Polonsky and the board, they will come in on time and under budget.

There again, the idea I'm introducing here is that there are sectors in any part of the economy that need a set of rules, and those are usually in contract language. I don't think this bill should in any way interfere with that. But even if I look broadly, the broader issue here is that it's very important to have labour place rules that protect workers. I completely agree, having worked for over 30 years in a variety of positions, mostly, as I said, at General Motors, but I was in South America and Quebec and I saw different workplace rules in different parts of the organizations I worked in.

When I worked in systems, we had the same kind of project work: a big reprogramming. Think of the Royal Bank, I think it was, that just went through the failure in their invoicing system. Imagine the hours those systems maintenance people worked to recover the data records. They must have worked endlessly to correct it. The customer service people would be working, the programming people, the systems and telecommunications people working feverishly, the accountants working feverishly. This kind of workplace, with inflexible rules that are somewhat suggested here, are maybe not workable in today's economy. But I think it's important always, if you have a reasonable employer and a reasonable employee, that they have agreements, formal and informal agreements, on what is required to get the job done.

Overarching all of that is that it's important to have a competitive economy where you have job creation. We don't need an unrealistic set of rules that prohibit a person's right to work. I'm not going down the road of right-to-work legislation, and I do respect the Rand formula, which is the dues checkoff provisions within the collective bargaining system that we have in most of Canada.

I do look at my riding in all things. As the member for Simcoe North said in his remarks, very appropriately, in construction and home renovation, seasonal, people working in the horticultural industry—but we as legislators have to look at the entire province—the mining and forestry sector. In my riding, the agricultural sector is extremely important. You look at the work they do and the short period of time they are allowed to plant the seeds and then later on to harvest the crops. I think of the horticultural business. I think of the apple and blueberry

industries. They have a harvest. The fruit is ripe and they have got to work the number of hours.

This may not seem related. Many people will just read the explanatory notes in the bill. It is a bit language-heavy and, as this is a legal document, it should be. But to get back to the essence of this bill, it's important to stress a couple of things. This bill really deals with the hours of work in a workweek. That's very simply stated. The intent here—I am reading directly from the introductory notes: "Employers are prohibited from requiring or permitting employees to work more than 48 hours in a workweek unless the employees have agreed to do so...."

There is no change there. When we introduced the previous amendments to the Employment Standards Act, it had to be agreement of employee and employer. They had to agree before it could be artificially enforced. But here is where the real stickiness gets into it: "in writing." In other words, now we've got the red tape and the bureaucracy coming in.

"In writing"; that's fine. It's a local thing. Then it says they've got a mandate to file them, to keep these documents or permits on record—more red tape.

It goes on to say, in the next paragraph, "If the employer has applied for an approval and the director has not yet made a decision on the application, employees may begin to work the additional hours," immediately. That's because they're even admitting now—I can just visualize it. There will be some little clerk sitting at the phone waiting to answer the phone or the fax machine. Then they'll say, "A fax isn't an original document," so a Purolator will show up with a big bundle of paper and some clerk will go through this. He won't know where the company—for instance, in my riding it could be GlobalTech, it could be Detox or it could be St Marys Cement. It could be any of the employers who are very respected and have great relationships with their employee groups. For this red-tape event to occur—by some clerical person using their sense of authority or duty to read every word of it and maybe send it to the legal staff to spend another 500 bucks on nothing to see if it's OK, when they may have a collective agreement locally where the union president, the plant president or the head of labour relations has agreed, and in fact they're already doing it. The whole idea of red tape is clearly throughout this bill. It's a minefield of barriers here to just getting on with getting the job done.

Imagine a farm business, or a business in construction that's waiting for some clerical person way up in some office that might even be here in Toronto, and they may have the weekend off, and they're busy trying to get the forms so they can get the footings poured. Do you understand? There's no flexibility here. As a matter of fact, I'll read the next section.

1640

It says, "The section of the act that states that a provision in the employment contract that provides a greater right than an employment standard prevails over the employment standard cannot be used to circumvent the requirements respecting approvals if employees

would be working more than 48 hours in a week." What it's saying here is that it can't get less. I agree we should have employment standards that set a standard that no employee should be expected to work under. Whether it's workplace safety, hazardous materials, workplace committees on safety and all that, I fully agree. At the end of the day, I think employers do have a responsibility to have safe workplaces and a reasonable working relationship.

Now, the employer who's sort of saying, "If we don't get this contract out by the end of the month, we fail the contract," and he's waiting for some clerical person up there to get the fax or the Purolator envelope—if they miss the contract, the employees are out of jobs and the employer is out of business. So you have to have some common sense in this thing.

I think the other thing is that respecting traditions in employment is important. I learned very quickly that seniority is an important provision. Seniority rights prevail, really, over a lot of other rights, which sometimes is a very complex issue. Seniority in overtime entitlement is another issue.

If you want to get to the skilled trades person, depending on how the collective agreement is worded, you may have to have five people who don't know how to run a numeric control device or a PLC or some kind of complex robotic equipment to get to the person who actually knows how to do it. The way the seniority's structured, you have to have five people there before they get the person they really need who knows how to fix that machine, the millwright. That's another complication, and it's not particularly in the bill.

But I'd just say that if the government really wants to move forward—and Minister Bentley is actually young and seems a very respectful minister, a practising lawyer. It's my understanding he's not practising at the moment, but he certainly brings a lot of insight into the legal jungle of contracts to this issue. I think he should look progressively forward on setting new entitlements for employee-employer groups, employee-employer relationships, contract, off-site, home work, all those things. There's much more work to be done in those areas, because that's the evolving future. A lot of work, as you know, can be done, whether it's through—teaching now could be done through distance education. The workplace itself is changing. We don't have the assembly line jobs that we did have once.

I do drive most of my comments—always, as the member from Simcoe North said—to my own riding of Durham. It is predominantly an agricultural riding and a very successful and diverse value-added riding. In that, I want to mention a couple of families that, to me, set a very high standard.

Mr Dunlop: Ten more minutes, John.

Mr O'Toole: Ten more minutes? I'll get to mention every person in my riding.

The point I'm trying to make is, it's Fred and Sandy Archibald, and I'd encourage anyone just to drive down Highway 401, take the exit at Liberty Street and go

straight north. I drive by thinking it's an apple orchard. Surprise. It's a destination. They have fruit. They make fruit into fruit wines. They now have hybrid grapes that they use in mixes that produce excellent—they provide a lot of community support in relationship with Big Brothers and Big Sisters. The events they have there include a cuisine event. Now they've opened a small golf course on the property. You talk about value added, talk about entrepreneurship; it's a tourism destination, and I encourage the people listening.

Now, if you think that's the end of it, if you want to visit a riding—and it's not me. I just happen to live there. I'm very fortunate to be the representative. In fact, I'm now asking for their support in the next election, because the dates are fixed. It's in 2007, unless Dalton changes his mind. But you just keep driving north; you go to Port Perry. If you're in Port Perry, you've got to know that—

Mr Dunlop: Port Perry's a great riding.

Mr O'Toole: Well, Port Perry, as somebody mentioned, is the home of chiropractic. Dr David Palmer—there's a park called Palmer Park. It's almost like a postcard. I'm sort of visualizing it now. If tears come to my eyes, you'll understand. Palmer Park is on Lake Simcoe. They have Canada Day there. It'll be coming up, and I'll be there. I'll be on the stage and bringing greetings from Queen's Park: Palmer Park, with a big bronze statue there.

There's a young entrepreneurial person who has just launched a tour vessel on Lake Simcoe, another wonderful destination. They have dinners and moonlight tours. It's spectacular. This creates jobs, and these are tourism jobs, destinations. They're entrepreneurs. Let's not put barriers in front of them. At the same time, send clear messages that there are standards, and make them understand that and give employee rights.

I'm just touring around. I look at the Mitchells, at Daphne Mitchell on the main street in Port Perry. It's called Settlement House. Drop in. They have a little restaurant at the back. On Settlement House, Daphne Mitchell was the retailer of the year in Canada, not just Durham, not just Ontario, but the entire country. Joel Aldred lives there and he's a great guy, actually a great supporter, really. Just drive down and his town hall project—then you go down just around the other side, Lakeridge 23. You're going to see another marvellous entrepreneurial agricultural value-added business. It's called Ocala wines. Ocala wines is another destination you should visit. This guy, Irwin Smith, and his wife Alissa are equivalent to the Archibalds in their inventiveness in creating opportunities for themselves, for employees and for the community. They're great fundraisers and very much philanthropist-type citizens.

I was there the other morning for the awards for chamber of commerce business of the year. There were three. There was Brock's. There were two or three other businesses. Pardon, I forget their names; I don't have any notes with me. The Brock family business on the main street in Port Perry has been there for years and years—excellent spot. The Brock family was there. There was

Irwin Smith serving breakfast. There he is. He's a winemaker. He owned a music store. He's a very talented musician.

I'm back on the track here in my riding, but this act does apply to these people, because they're creating the economy that creates wealth for this province. Every time they take an apple or a bunch of grapes and apply knowledge and skill to make it into a product that has more value, and add some of what I call the aesthetics around that—the place, the destination, the tourism, the bus—all of this is adding value, which is all taxed, which comes to the province of Ontario, which helps to pay for health care.

These are the people we've got to champion, and this bill should not interfere with the creating of wealth that we all share. So I've brought you full circle here on the importance of having reasonable employment standards in a multitude of workplace settings: agriculture, construction, software development, emergency cases, persons working in seasonal and contract-type employment, home work.

I'm going to read one of the sections of the bill because I got carried away, and for those viewing, my signing-off statement on Durham, my riding, is to come and visit. It's right off the 401, Lakeridge 23, Lakeridge Road, or anywhere, Simcoe Street, Liberty Street. You can get into it. Once you're into it, you'll never leave. It's one of the fastest growing.

The home construction business is a whole other deal. Drive down Taunton Road. You can hardly find space. Really, it's all spontaneously linked here, because now I'm looking at Bill 26, the Planning Act, and Bill 27, which is the greenbelt act. The implications of John Gerretsen's bill—John, as a former mayor of Kingston, should know better, actually. That bill has caused the prices of lots in my riding to double and triple.

Interjection.

Mr O'Toole: No, I don't want to mention members, because it could get them in trouble here. They've got to understand the economic circle here, how it works. Those people who are buying a house—the value goes up, the lots double. What that means is the \$200,000 mortgage or plus is over 30 or 40 years, and when you put \$10,000 or \$20,000 on the end of that, you pay about \$100,000 over 10 years on a mortgage.

Now they're talking about—they've got conversations going on the development charges. The homebuyer pays for it. The young couple with the young family who are trying to work and save for the children's university are being forced by this drying up of serviced lots. They're going to pay for it in their mortgage. It comes out of their pocket after working hard, and they're putting another barrier saying he or she can't work.

1650

As I get into these things, I still think they're tinkering seriously with the economy. They've raised taxes. We understand that is their privilege. They've broken the law. I've accepted that—well, I haven't accepted it, but get over it.

I sat for two days on a time-allocated bill where they never accepted one reasonable amendment to the bill. It was a charade. They want to say they had public consultations. Name one change they made if you had the consultations. They had their mind made up. Their mind was frozen in time, right from October 2, when they changed everything they said prior to October 2—but I digress.

Going back to the bill, I could go on, because this bill affects all of my constituents' lives. When I think of people lives, it's my duty to stand up on their behalf and speak as long as possible. I think of the work I've done with the CAW 222, the Power Workers. I look at the Power Workers. I'm just going to digress for a moment, because the Power Workers, the electricity producers in this province—

Interjection.

Mr O'Toole: Bill 100? Can't wait until that one starts, because I have a fair understanding of what's going down there.

This is a report you all got this week. I'm drawing it to your attention. Please look at it; it's important. It's Bruce Power. You've got it, so I will just help you a little.

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton): That's a private company, isn't it?

Mr O'Toole: We're not getting into that, Mr Chudleigh.

Speaking of Chudleigh and agriculture, your brother was named this past week to the Ontario Agricultural Hall of Fame. The Chudleigh family are all over the world. Congratulations. You should have been the Minister of Agriculture. You should have been the minister. We did some things right.

Here are some facts on Bruce Power. This is worth knowing: They have 3,700 employees, a very complex 7-day-a-week, 24-hour-a-day operation, a nuclear plant. You tell me how they're going to send some piece of paper from this bill to some clerk in Toronto to tell them they can or cannot work, when there is safety and other overriding decisions that the clerical person—I say "clerical person" because if you read this, do you know what it says? "The director's authority to issue approvals for ... work in excess of 48 hours a week and approvals for averaging may be delegated to any Ministry of Labour employee."

Anybody. It's your turn on the desk. Can you imagine? It's right in the bill: "any Ministry of Labour employee." I was amazed. I think you should amend that section. I propose that amendment almost now, Minister of Labour. I told you there is a little weakness here in the bill. They should not delegate to "any Ministry of Labour employee." That's ridiculous. It could be the sweeper or something.

Size: 932 hectares. It produces 65% of the world's cobalt. And this plant has operated with an absolute zero accident record in the last number of years since the Bruce people took over. They are to be commended, the whole workforce. I hear Duncan Hawthorne all the time, championing the working relationship with the Power

Workers, their shareholders. It's a success story this bill needs to have respect for, because that's the changing environment of the future.

This is another one too on the energy thing that tells me about construction projects. It says: "The restart of the B system"—I follow this stuff—"there are more than five million hours invested in the project." Imagine that. What project management, a megaproject with the minutiae of who works how many hours and unions and contracts. They may have four contractors on-site, there may be a project management team, there could be several contacts on the site, and they're going to have some clerk picking up the phone in Toronto to approve that they can work. I guess not. I think it's fine in industrial settings and various things like that, but there's a weakness there.

This project is just one clear illustration we all have that Ontario's economy is built on flexible, strong rules, and employment standards should be just that, not another layer of bureaucracy, red tape, filling in forms, and e-mailing, faxing and Purolating. Let's get on.

I have a very diverse riding. I have the Darlington nuclear plant, which is one of the heritage sites. It's fully functional and is operated by OPG. I'm very proud to work with them—an excellent safety record. They generate enough power at that plant—I think it's the largest nuclear plant in the world. It could be the second, but I think it's the largest. I think there's an application to expand that site, so I'll be talking to Dwight Duncan to try and make sure that we do the right thing there.

In respect to this bill, there's some substance in it. We need to have standards that protect all employees. We need to have flexibility in some sectors, specifically construction, software, outsourcing and new models of work relationships, and moving forward in that respect. Having worked in that area for 30-some years, I would be supportive.

I'm going to give up the rest of my time—reluctantly, of course—because I want to hear from the member for Kitchener-Waterloo. When I came here in 1995, I think Mrs Witmer was Minister of Labour. I was asked to join her advisory committee and learned of the passion and commitment she brought to the ministries that she was in. I'm very proud to work with her. In health she was a leader. George Smitherman should speak to her respectfully. I'm sure she will work with him. I know Doris Grinspun, head of the RNAO, yesterday in committee complimented Minister Witmer as being a leader and a visionary in nursing practices in Ontario. Get a copy of the Hansard. If you want it, I'll send it to you.

I would say there are some members who haven't been here long enough to know—I won't mention names, Jeff. It's a long afternoon and I am at this point in time trying to signal that perhaps the former minister would be ready to pick up her speech.

In the meantime, there are other things going on in Durham as well. Tomorrow morning—do you want to know more about the riding, Mr Speaker? The riding of Durham is worth visiting. It's a growth riding, it's a

diverse riding and it's about 50% urban and 50% rural. It's an absolutely perfect place for a pilot project. I'm just going to bring this up. We had a meeting the other night in Port Perry. I think of Mayor Marilyn Pearce of Scugog council, a leader—her council, working with Dr Stewart. As well, George Zegarac from the Ministry of Health was there; Dr Stewart and several other experts—no politicians. Marilyn Pearce herself did not sit on the panel. There was standing room only. I think about 1,500 to 2,000 people were in the Scugog community centre. You couldn't get in.

The issue they brought forward—I believe George Smitherman should listen. It would be an excellent teaching site in rural health. All the doctors work collectively and co-operatively there. They cover emergency seven days a week, 24 hours day. There's a community there that's right and ready to be a model site to work in partnership with the University of Toronto, to have a rural health faculty complement the University of Toronto. Even the hospital is a very good place.

When you look at workplace rules—seven days a week; 24 hours a day; heavy lifting; difficulties; the highest incidence of workplace injury is in nursing; lifting and transferring patients—there's a lot of work to be done. I challenge Minister Bentley to get on with it. I don't think your government is prepared to call this bill. I think it's just being delayed. Most of the relationships—I've not had a single call on Bill 63. And even when we implemented the 60-hour workweek—I understand that Wayne Samuelson has a different job. The Federation of Labour gets people upset, Conservatives, whatever, but you actually never hear any complaints. I never heard a single complaint. I have well-organized, mostly unionized workplaces that have worked out their differences. In the case of General Motors, Michael Grimaldi is the president there. He's got a wonderful relationship with the CAW. They respect one another. They have different roles, but that operation runs seven days a week, 24 hours a day, building great cars, and 95% of them go to the US. So workplace rules and standards are important.

There could be 12 minutes left. I'm anxious to hear from the member for Kitchener-Waterloo. Minister Watson is over talking to her because she has so much wisdom to share.

There are other sections of this bill that should be read. Here's one that's quite interesting. It's meant as a positive comment. It's in the third-last paragraph and it says, "Employers are required to retain copies of employee agreements to work hours in excess of the limits in the act, and employee agreements to average hours of work for overtime pay purposes, for three years after work was last performed under them"—so three years.

You have these industries today that come and go. Because they're all amalgamating, merging and changing, you've got boxes of paper to carry around, disks, software and systems upgrades. Who's got the paper? This is really quite unnecessary. They are filing the document. The document's there and the Ministry of Labour already has a copy. Keep it. Forget all the paperwork on the industries that may come and go.

I respectfully mean it when I say that the member for Kitchener-Waterloo is a person who brings value in judgment and contribution to this place and I'm anxious to hear her comments as a former Minister of Labour on how to make this bill better.

Thank you for listening to my long story today.

1700

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member from Kitchener-Waterloo.

Mrs Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): I want to congratulate my colleague from Durham. Once again, he has presented a wonderful interpretation of the impact of this bill. He has brought into it some very colourful and interesting stories about people and places in his riding, the impact that this bill has and also the impact that some of the legislation this government is bringing forward has.

I also want to congratulate the member from Simcoe North, who spoke to this bill. He was our leadoff speaker. He's undertaken to do that on many occasions this session. We need to really appreciate the hard work he has put into researching different bills and making sure he puts on the record the opinions and the input he receives, not only from people in his own riding but people throughout Ontario.

I'm pleased to say a few words—I'm not going to be speaking for a long time. I had the opportunity, I guess the good fortune, to have been Minister of Labour in 1995. I can tell you that at that time we were making sure that the Employment Standards Act was going to continue to be updated to reflect the working environment of today. I think we all recognize that the environment today is certainly much different than it was years ago. You need to continue to meet with both employees and employers, you need to identify the issues and you need to make sure that the legislation responds to the priorities.

We have here today the hours of work act, Bill 63, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000, with respect to hours of work and certain other matters. I will tell you that this change to the act actually doesn't do much; certainly not what it purports to do. This does not bring an end to a 60-hour workweek. It doesn't do much to actually change the relationship between the employer and the employee in relation to the hours worked. In fact, the 60 hours will remain, but now, if you're going to achieve those hours, the employer is going to have to jump through some hoops in order to comply with regulatory requirements. It's important to put that on the record, that there is not a lot of change. It doesn't end the 60-hour workweek at all.

Subsection 2(1), for example, amends section 2 of the Employment Standards Act and requires a poster containing information about the bill to be placed in a prominent place in the workplace.

Section 2 of the bill amends section 15 of the act, which deals with the retention of hours-of-work agreements by the employer.

Section 4 amends section 17 of the act and provides for the situation that, where approval to go beyond 48

hours has been sought and not received, workers are allowed to work the increased hours for 30 days. Clause 17(1)(b) sets out the 48-hour requirement.

Subsection 17(4) sets out the criteria that will allow for a 60-hour workweek even if approval from the ministry is not received within the 30-day period after application.

Section 17.1 provides a mechanism for the employer to apply to the director for approval, allowing some or all employees to work a 60-hour workweek.

I think you can see that this in no way, shape or form does what this government said it would do and eliminates the 60 hours of work in a week. That's what this government advertised would be happening. They tried to portray us as forcing workers to work 60-hour weeks, and of course that's not so. The 60-hour workweek remains but there is a different regulatory regime that is now put in place.

What this bill does as well is add a paper burden to the work that is to be undertaken by an employer. That does not help the employees. It reduces flexibility in the industry for small businesses. As I say, there is more paperwork that needs to be undertaken, forms to be filled out. I think today in our workplaces, employees and employers are all looking for flexibility. People don't work from 7 to 4 o'clock. There's flexibility; there are flex hours. A lot of people are working at night or working whatever hours they want to work. It's a matter of getting the work done that needs to be done. I know in my community of Kitchener-Waterloo, if you take a look at employees who are employed in the high-tech sector, most of them are working very flexible hours. And we know there are many people today who choose to and want to work overtime.

If you take a look at the budget bill that's been introduced by the Liberal government, because people are now going to have to pay the health tax if they're making over \$20,000 a year, in order to make up the money that is going to be lost, I would think there may even be more people than ever before who are going to be looking for some extra hours so that they have the same leftover amount of money in their paycheque to support their family.

I can tell you that the health tax and the delisting of health services has caused more anger, frustration and disappointment in this province than any other piece of legislation that I can remember. We had a rally here today. We had chiropractors here today, we had patients of chiropractors here today, and they were talking about the impact that the delisting of chiropractic services was going to have on them as patients. They were so disappointed that this government had broken its promise to the people of Ontario. They had violated their most sacred election commitment, and that was not to raise taxes. They made a commitment to improve health care services, to improve access to services, yet the same government that promised to improve access to front-line health care services has now totally delisted chiropractic services, eye exams and physiotherapy. That is re-

grettable. When it comes to eye exams, there will still be coverage for those who are under the age of 20 or over the age of 65, but the reality is, eye disease, eye problems, can impact you. They can cause problems at any age. I had an example of a young person who talked to me, someone probably about 25 years old, who just recently went to the optometrist because he knew that if he didn't go now, he was going to have to pay out of his pocket. He was diagnosed with a problem that he knew nothing about and that now is going to be treated.

1710

I can tell you, this bill that we have in front of us, this 60-hour workweek bill, is not what people in the province are talking about. People in the province are talking about the breaking of the promise not to raise taxes. People are now going to be much more eager and willing and wanting to work overtime because of the fact that they are going to have to pay for their eye exams, chiropractic services and physiotherapy, and they are going to have to pay for the new health tax. If you make over \$20,000 in this province, you are now going to have to pay this health tax, and it's going to cause a lot of hardship.

Our government isn't going to say much more on this bill. We recognize that the government in power has the opportunity to ensure the passage of this bill, but I would just point out that the bill does not purport to do what it was advertised as doing, and that is, bringing an end to the 60-hour workweek. Our changes provided flexibility. This bill is going to put in place more red tape in the province. I will just quote Len Crispino, the president and CEO of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, who said, "We're less than happy with what appears to be an excessive reliance on enforcement."

Certainly, as I say, there hasn't been a lot of support for the bill. Even the Ontario Federation of Labour acknowledges that this does not mean the end of the 60-hour workweek.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Hamilton East.

Ms Horwath: I want to take the opportunity on behalf of New Democratic Party members in the House to respond to the comments of the members for Simcoe North, Durham and Kitchener-Waterloo.

It's very interesting for me to hear the comments because I agree in many respects that this bill does nothing. It is a do-nothing bill. It's another example of how this government ran on a platform of change and of making some real, significant changes to the previous government's actions. Particularly, they talked about labour issues. Here we have this bill that really doesn't do anything at all except tinker with some of the regulatory framework around an Employment Standards Act that was put in by the previous government and one that is not positive for workers.

Quite frankly, I find that when you look at the combination of what is being proposed and what exists currently in legislation, you really have nothing. You have zero. You have a number of initiatives that simply

add bureaucracy to a system that's already bad. What we really need is progressive labour legislation. We need progressive changes. We need a framework that's going to allow workers to have a quality of life where they are not enslaved by their jobs, where they actually have opportunities to have a quality of life spending time with their families.

Perhaps if we start looking at the wages that workers earn, we can have hours of work that are more appropriate for a balanced lifestyle. Unfortunately, this government is not going down that road. Instead, they are saying that it's OK to work 60-hour workweeks. Not only that, it's OK to work that 60 hours and not get paid for overtime as long the employer can manipulate the hours of work for which those 60 hours are being put in over a two-week period. That's not appropriate. Although I disagree philosophically with the speakers who were speaking on the bill previously, I do agree with one thing, and that is, this is a do-nothing bill. It doesn't change the framework and it doesn't do anything for the working people of Ontario.

Mr Wayne Arthurs (Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge): It's a pleasure to take a couple of minutes on the bill, and I certainly want to recognize the minister. He's been here diligently listening to the debate from the members opposite so that he has a full understanding of the concerns they might have.

I must say I am a little surprised at the approach, the attitude that this is a do-nothing bill. It's interesting that when you have had traditionally, for many decades, a maximum workweek of 48 hours—and think of that in the context of eight- or 10-hour days; that's virtually five 10-hour days out of a seven-day week or six eight-hour days—and then the former government increases that to a 60-hour workweek, that's six 10-hour days. That's virtually the whole week. So that's a substantive change back to a more reasonable expectation about what workers can expect.

It's appropriate that we're debating the bill at this time. I appreciate the comments from the members opposite that they'd rather be debating the budget. Frankly, so would we at this point. But the structure we have requires us to debate bills at various points in time and bring them on stream to get all the debating hours in when people are available.

I was driving in to the Legislature this morning and listening to the news, and there were comments about worker safety related to young people. It's that time of year when both high school and university students are out in the workplace, either just starting or they've been out there for a month or so. This legislation, Bill 63, is about protecting those workers' rights so they're not being abused from the standpoint of work hours and opportunities for overtime payment with averaging provisions. So it's a good time to be debating the bill, to acknowledge that workers do have rights, that young people have rights in the workplace, and that the employer has an obligation to those people, both permanent employees and the young people working during the summer months.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I was listening to the discussion earlier, and I will have more to say about this bill in a few minutes. Allow me just to say this at this point: This is another one of those bills where much was promised and not much has been delivered. In fact, in my view, there is more in the press release than there is in the bill. I suspect that's really what was going on here: The government wanted to generate a press release and hoped that people out there who don't know a lot about this would perhaps be impressed for a while. But people who have been around this issue for a while know there is not very much here. That's why I say there was probably more in the press release than there is in the bill.

I suspect we're going to see quite a few of these over the next while, where the government said before the election that the legislation the Conservatives brought in was terrible and it has to be changed. They'll announce that they are changing it, and it will sound from the press releases that they are changing it, and then you read the bill and you discover not much has changed at all.

Another recent example: The Conservatives pursued hydro privatization. The Liberals, when they were in opposition, said, "We're opposed to hydro privatization. It's got to be public power. The private market is dead." Yet what did we see in the announcement of the Minister of Energy yesterday? The same hydro privatization strategy the Conservatives trotted out, except the Liberals put a little bit of red wrapping on it and now want to pretend it's something different.

That's very much what happened with this bill. It doesn't make fundamental changes to what existed before; it simply puts a little bit of red Liberal wrapping paper on it and the government then will pretend it has somehow done something substantive.

Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough): It is a delight to have an opportunity to make a few comments on Bill 63. I just want to set the table here. In Ontario in May: 30,800 new jobs, 9,200 in manufacturing. What a success story. I hear the doom and gloom. I'm happy I'm going back to Peterborough tonight, because here all week I hear the doom and gloom from the folks opposite and it really is depressing, and when I hear that Stephen Harper, if he happens to become Prime Minister—no help for the auto industry in Ontario; Oshawa, a ghost town. Workers in businesses in Peterborough like Ventra Plastics, Merit Precision, Fisher Gauge, all dependent on the auto industry, won't have their jobs because of what Mr Harper might do.

1720

I better get on to the bill here, Bill 63. I meet quarterly with members of the Peterborough and District Labour Council. They see some great, positive initiatives in this bill, particularly targeting inspections of workplaces, focusing on high-risk employers for compliance, all aspects of the ESA—great stuff; I salute this minister—stricter enforcement, including prosecutions where warranted. It won't be this business that you phone somebody for an inspection; there will be somebody on-

site to make the inspection, to root out those bad workplaces that may exist in Ontario, to protect workers as they should be protected. When they leave at 8 o'clock in the morning, there is the expectation that a wife or husband or significant other should come home at 5 o'clock, and this Minister of Labour is going to make sure that happens in Ontario through this bill.

The other thing is, in the high-technology world we are going to have a new, modern Web-based opportunity so people on a daily basis can get information about their workplaces, and this is under the leadership of this Minister of Labour.

The Acting Speaker: Response from the member for Simcoe North.

Mr Dunlop: I'd like to thank the members from Hamilton East, Kenora-Rainy River, Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge and Peterborough for their comments on the comments made by myself, the member from Kitchener-Waterloo and the member from Durham, who all spoke and brought out a lot of really good points.

I think the comments, the Qs and As, that I found the most exciting and I guess the most hilarious were those from the member for Peterborough. This government, elected last fall, if there's anything wrong in the province today, if there's anything at all wrong, always blames it on the previous government, plain and simple. If there are not enough MRIs, it's Tony Clement's fault. If there's something wrong in the education system, it's Janet Ecker's fault or Elizabeth Witmer's fault. But when there are new jobs created, suddenly they think they are going to take credit for the new jobs. Of course there are new jobs being created. There will be new jobs created for at least the next year, and do you know why? It's because of the base we put in place.

Interjection: No.

Mr Dunlop: Absolutely. That's why there are 31,000 new jobs. In about 18 months from now, when the manufacturers of Ontario and the workforce realize, that's when they are going to understand exactly what Dalton McGuinty has done. An example is the health care premium we're going to vote on tonight. So I'm glad you acknowledge the fact that the Harris-Eves government created 31,000 new jobs in the month of March. It's because of our economic policies that it's happening. Give yourselves a year, and we'll watch the numbers very carefully when they trickle off and there are more people on welfare. That's what we'll see in Ontario. I am fearmongering, but the fact of the matter is, that's the path this government is taking the province of Ontario down.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Kenora-Rainy River.

Mr Hampton: I said a few minutes ago that I would have more to say about this bill, and indeed I am going to say a few things about this bill now.

The government said, when they were in opposition, that the Conservatives' 60-hour workweek was atrocious. It was terrible. It was something that would have to be removed immediately in Ontario. They said that before

the election and they said it all through the election. I think they even said it in their throne speech. So it's interesting now to see what they've produced in the bill and compare it to their rhetoric before the election and after the election.

A reasonable person reading this bill would expect that there would be no provisions for a 60-hour workweek. But alas, employers can still have their workers work a 60-hour workweek. That's not gone. Apparently Liberals didn't mean what they said before and during the election campaign, that a 60-hour workweek was atrocious, that it was taking us back to the 19th century. Apparently those were just words while Liberals were trolling for votes, because indeed, when we look at this legislation, this proposed law, there would still be 60-hour workweeks. This is even worse than the Conservative legislation, because in fact under this legislation, Liberal legislation, employers can get workweeks even longer than 60-hour weeks—even longer. If the Conservatives were taking us back to the 19th century, it now appears that the Liberals want to go back to the 18th century.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): The 13-hour workdays.

Mr Hampton: The 13-hour workdays. I wonder where someone's going to find time for their family with 13-hour workdays. I wonder where someone's going to find time to participate in the community with 13-hour workdays. I wonder where someone is going to find the wherewithal to be able to protect their health and safety with 13-hour workdays.

I've been in situations where you're working shift work and at the end of an eight-hour shift your replacement doesn't come in, so they say, "Can you stay for another two or three hours while we find the replacement?" I know what happens after you've been on the job for 10 or 11 hours, particularly if you happen to be working the midnight shift. For the last couple of hours you sort of wander around the job in some kind of stupor. Some days, when you finally do get to leave the factory or the plant, you go home saying to yourself, "My God, I'm lucky I didn't kill myself. I'm even luckier that I didn't kill somebody else. Here I was, 10 or 11 hours on the job, and the last couple of hours I was barely alert. I barely knew what I was doing."

But the Liberal government, which criticized the Conservatives' 60-hour week, is now prepared to allow employers to demand workweeks that are longer than 60 hours, prepared to allow employers to insist on a 13-hour workday. So I say again, if the Conservatives were trying to take Ontario workers back to the 19th century, Liberals are happy to go back to the 18th century, having promised that they were going to eliminate the 60-hour workweek.

The only thing I can think of is that voters should have asked for the fine print. They should have asked for the fine print because what the Liberals meant when they said, "The 60-hour workweek is atrocious," was that it's not long enough. That's what they meant: It's not long

enough. If it's a 10- or 11-hour day, it's not long enough. Let's go for a 13-hour workday.

As I say, I think this is another regular day in the life of Dalton McGuinty. It's another broken promise. Another regular day in the life of Dalton McGuinty: Just break another promise.

I remember when the Conservatives introduced the 60-hour workweek. They said, "This is in keeping with the modern world." I've heard rhetoric from some of the Liberals here who are now trying to say that the longer-than-60-hour workweek is in keeping with the modern world, and the 13-hour workday is in keeping in the modern world. Then how come the standard workweek in British Columbia is 40 hours, Saskatchewan is 40, Manitoba, Quebec, Newfoundland, Nunavut, Yukon and Northwest Territories?

I'm thinking Alberta. It's Alberta. You're after Ralph Klein. You want to imitate Ralph Klein. That's where you find the extra-long workday and the extra-long workweek. If you look at other provinces in Canada, 40-hour workweeks. None of them are interested in a 60-hour-plus workweek or a 13-hour workday.

Hon Christopher Bentley (Minister of Labour): You're mixing it up.

Mr Hampton: The minister says I'm mixing it up. I know what the rhetoric was from Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals before and during the election. Now I see the reality here. You obviously meant that the 60-hour Conservative workweek wasn't long enough. This provides for a workweek longer than 60 hours. All the employer has to do is apply.

Some are going to say, "The workers don't have to agree." I ask people across Ontario who work in a workplace without a union, what happens if the employer comes to you and says, "Look, I want you to work a 65-hour workweek and I want you to work six 13-hour workdays"? What happens if you refuse? What happens if you say to the employer, "I don't want to do it and I'm not going to do it," and you don't have a unionized workplace, you don't have a union to protect you? I know what happens in those situations. You either don't get called in to work or you suddenly find that you get to work at the worst times, times that the employer perhaps knows are completely inconvenient for you because you have an issue like child care or other family responsibilities, or you simply find that you're not wanted any more, directly.

1730

In fact, workers have no power. They have no capacity to say no to an employer unless they have a union. If the employer demands, "I want you to work a 60-hour workweek," there is nothing workers can do. And this bill certainly doesn't help or do anything for those workers. Why? There are no additional enforcement resources. We know one of the things the Conservatives did shortly after becoming the government, shortly before they introduced the 60-hour workweek—which now looks progressive when you compare it with this, the longer-than-60-hour workweek—they radically cut the number

of enforcement officers at the Ministry of Labour, they radically cut the number of inspectors, so there are very few workplace inspectors and enforcement officers who are out there in unorganized workplaces policing what is happening.

Did the government increase the number of inspectors or enforcement officers with this bill or complementary to this bill? No, not at all. There is no added enforcement. There is no added level of inspection. Workers who do not have a union to represent them do not have any additional resources as a result of this legislation or anything complementary to this legislation. They're on their own, which means they face the same circumstances they faced under the Conservatives. If the employer wants a longer workweek, employees, workers don't have anybody on their side. If they refuse to accept, they will very quickly find themselves getting the short end of the stick.

I want to point out that there are some other things the Conservatives did in their legislation that the Liberals said they were going to remove. Conservatives brought in overtime averaging. People might wonder what overtime averaging is. Well, overtime averaging is like this—and overtime averaging is a big gift to employers: In the Employment Standards Amendment Act, 2000, it allows overtime to be averaged over up to four weeks, rather than being paid after 44 hours in one week. So an employer could say, "I want you to work a 60-hour week this week, a 60-hour week next week, maybe less than that the following week and less than that the following week, and then we average it over four weeks." If it comes out at less than 44 hours a week, averaged, no overtime.

What happens here? What happens here is that in fact those provisions enacted by the Conservatives aren't disturbed at all. So what does it mean? What it means is workers can still be told, "You're going to come in and work a 60-hour workweek this week and a 60-hour workweek next week. The week after that you may work somewhat less, and the week after that you may work somewhat less," and they still don't get paid any overtime because the Liberals are going to allow the same kind of overtime averaging the Conservatives have allowed. I was positive the Liberals said before the election and during the election that they weren't going to allow that any more. But, lo and behold, here it is.

One of the other things that was said at the same time this legislation was announced was the government said they were going to be more proactive in inspecting workplaces. We did a little research, and how can you be proactive if there's already a backlog, in other words, complaints that have been raised with the Ministry of Labour, that reaches not a backlog of 100, not a backlog of 1,000, but a backlog of several thousand?

What does the government mean by being proactive? I guess what they mean is that in the case of those people who have already been wronged in their workplace, those workers who have already been taken advantage of and somehow have had the temerity to complain to the employment standards branch of the Ministry of Labour,

they won't investigate those. They'll use the inspectors and enforcement staff to do, as they call it, out-in-front investigations, or as they say, investigations without a complaint. What happens to those workers who have already complained?

Hon Mr Bentley: They're dealt with too.

Mr Hampton: When? The Minister of Labour says everybody gets dealt with. With the same enforcement staff, the same number of inspectors the Conservatives had, if you already have a backlog in the thousands, I don't understand it. Anybody can add up two and two. I don't think anybody can understand how you can deal both with the backlog of complaints you've already received and actually go out and do forward-looking inspections—

Hon Mr Bentley: Proactive.

Mr Hampton: Proactive inspections, as the government wants to call them. Somewhere, somebody gets shortchanged. Either the 2,000 proactive inspections that were advertised amount to a drive-by inspection, "Hi, I was here. Now I can mark you down as an inspection," or the people who have already complained about their workplace get short shrift.

I think what it comes down to is this: There was more in the press release than there is in the bill. In fact, there was much more in the press release than there is in the bill, so this was another Liberal advertising project. You advertise that you're going to do something, you re-advertise that you're going to do something, you announce that you're going to do something, you re-announce that you're going to do something, and you hope that after the advertising, the announcements and the re-announcements, the public believes you, and then you produce virtually the same legislation the Conservatives produced.

Interjection.

Mr Hampton: The Minister of Labour's shaking his head over there and says I'm wrong. You stand up and tell the people of Ontario that employers can't have a workweek longer than 60 hours. You stand up there and tell them that. You stand up and tell people that the 60-hour workweek the Conservatives put in place is now eliminated, no longer here. You stand up and tell people that. I want you to stand up and tell people that, so we can make a good issue of this. We can go around and around. Stand up and tell the people that there are going to be more enforcement officers, that there are going to be more inspectors, because we know there aren't.

The cuts the Conservatives put in place in terms of enforcement officers and inspectors are the same under the Liberal government. What we may see under the Liberal government is some privatization or contracting out of the inspections. This is the latest rumble we're starting to hear with respect to Liberal plans.

What are workers to do? I invite workers across Ontario to read the bill. The minister says, "Read the bill." I invite workers from across Ontario to read this bill, because you will find that as a result of this bill you may end up working a week that is longer than 60 hours.

What you will find is that the employer can ask for, and get, a workday of 13 hours under this bill, and that there is no more inspection. There is no greater enforcement under the Liberals than existed under the Conservatives.

1740

The government has made a big to-do about how they're going to make this information available on Web sites and in several different languages. Since it doesn't fundamentally change what the Conservatives put in place, since it doesn't provide any more protections to workers and since it doesn't provide any more enforcement for workers, why spend the money? Why spend all the money on promotion, when in fact substantively the law really hasn't changed? If anything, this will potentially make it more strenuous, more difficult for non-unionized workers than even the Conservative legislation. My advice to the government would be—I'd go back to the drawing board. If the best you can do is to make Conservative legislation worse, if the best you can do is to in fact extend what was the Conservatives' 60-hour workweek into an even longer workweek, if the best you can do is to say to workers, "We've now made provision for a 13-hour workday," I suggest you take the bill and go back to the drawing board and try to come up with something at least a little better.

If you can't do that or if you won't do that, would you at least increase the number of labour inspectors, the number of enforcement officers, so that the several thousand workers who have made complaints to the employment standards branch will at last have their complaints addressed? But please don't tell people that you're going to be making 2,000 proactive inspections with the same number of enforcement officers and inspectors who already are having to deal with a backlog in the thousands of cases. That just doesn't add up; that doesn't work. I suspect that the more workers find out that that is the reality, in contrast to what is being promised—they'll soon understand that this isn't going anywhere.

I actually look forward to some response from the government. This doesn't do away with the Conservative 60-hour workweek; this makes it worse. This potentially allows employers to gather something more than a 60-hour workweek: a 13-hour workday.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore.

Ms Laurel C. Broten (Etobicoke-Lakeshore): I'm pleased to have a chance to respond to my friend opposite, who always likes to take an opportunity to tell a good scaremongering story. We wouldn't want the facts to get in the way of that story. This legislation is a government commitment to end the 60-hour workweek and is aimed in response to that commitment. As my friends have said before, we're bringing some balance back into the workplaces across Ontario. With this legislation we are going to let workers empower themselves to have an opportunity to decide how many hours they will work in a week, to make sure they're familiar with their rights by ensuring that information about rights is posted in the workplace in many different languages.

This bill, if passed, restores protections that workers had for decades, frankly, likely under the government that my friend opposite was a member of. Those protections existed before 2001 and were removed in 2001. What we are doing is going back to a time when we respected the rights of workers and acknowledged the importance of workers balancing their work life with their family life. This bill is part of an overall strategy to raise employment standards in this province through awareness, outreach and enhanced enforcement strategies and it's a key part of protecting our workers, workers who live in each of our communities and who work hard each and every day.

The difference between our government and the scare-mongering tactics of my friend opposite is that we believe in a balance between workers' rights and businesses that need to prosper in our province. We're making sure that employers won't have a difficult time living up to the new expectations that we're imposing on them, because we're going to make it easy to have balance in our workplaces that will benefit both our employers and our employees.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Simcoe North.

Mr Dunlop: Yes, Mr Speaker, what a surprise. I finally made it into the House this week. Four days left, eh?

I'm pleased to rise and respond. Again, I think we said it earlier today and, as I mentioned, I made some calls to some of our largest employers because I wanted to hear the impact of what people were saying in our ridings. Again, I don't speak for all of the province but I believe I do speak for people in my riding. I asked them what this bill really meant to them, because I think they're concerned. Any time a bill from the Ministry of Labour goes through, I think it's important that we acknowledge our employers and our employees. I've got to tell you that it's almost an unheard-of bill. People don't even know it exists in my part of the province. Maybe in London or Windsor it's a huge issue, and I'm not hearing that. I speak on behalf of the residents of the riding of Simcoe North and they say it doesn't really matter.

It's a very diverse economy. We have a very diverse group of employers as well as employees in that part of the province, and a lot of the work is seasonal, so people expect to put in a lot of hours in the summer months, in the good weather, because they know they'll likely get an opportunity for layoffs in some of the construction-related jobs as we go toward some of the bad weather in December, January and February.

As I said earlier, I applaud the minister for bringing it forth. He thinks he's doing what is right, and I applaud any minister for doing that. But the bottom line, what I'm hearing in my part of the province, is that it's not a very important bill. I haven't had a letter, an e-mail, a fax or even a phone call on it, so it's really not important to my constituents at this point.

We look forward to further debate and comments from the minister himself, as he sits over there smiling at me.

Mr Tony C. Wong (Markham): I'd like to respond to the member for Kenora-Rainy River with respect to the issue of what a genuine choice is. We want to not only let workers have the right to choose whether to work for more than 48 hours; it's actually more than that. I think they not only deserve, but have the right, to balance a rewarding work life with their personal life. It is easy for us to say, "Let's limit it to 40 hours or 48 hours, and then no overtime, period." We will not be doing them a favour; in fact, we'll be doing them a disservice, because there are employees who want or need to work more than 40 or 48 hours to pay the rent or put food on the table. So this is the choice; this is the balance we're putting forward.

I want to talk about my riding of Markham. In Markham we have many high-tech companies. They excel. We are called the high-tech capital of Canada, and they can excel because they are working around the clock. They are competing against time. To be able to lead the cutting edge of high technology, you have to put in long hours. Many employers and employees agree and they take pride in doing so. That is why, in striking this balance, this bill is able to (1) provide this balance, and (2) provide the employees with the genuine right to make a choice of whether or not they want to work more than 48 hours. In addition to that, it provides flexibility for both the employers and employees, especially in areas such as high-tech, to be able to put in the long hours. Of course they will be rewarded accordingly, whether in terms of payment or time in lieu of work afterward.

The Acting Speaker: Response? The Chair recognizes the member from Kenora-Rainy River.

Mr Hampton: I want to thank members for their contribution. I want to say that some of what was said, though, sounds like it comes out of a Charles Dickens novel, where we must make the children work faster because the machine demands that we make the children work faster, that some people need to work a 63-hour workweek, that people need to work 13 hours a day, because the economy demands it.

Mr Qaadri: Choice.

Mr Hampton: Some of the Liberals say, "Oh, that's choice." Bull. That is what happens when you don't have adequate legislation protecting workers. That is what happens when you leave workers open to exploitation.

The minister said a while ago that this would help workers, that there was adequate enforcement. I just want to remind the minister that last year there were 15,000 claims, complaints against employers, and only one prosecution was started; that we have had claims for \$214 million in workers' wages; that 73% of the monies the government has ordered employers to pay workers has gone unpaid in the past eight years. The government failed to address how it would go after deadbeat employers, who from 1995 to 2003 owe over 63,000 workers their wages.

Is the government going to improve enforcement? No. Is the government going to add to enforcement? No. The government says that by permitting 13-hour workdays

and workweeks in excess of 60 hours a week somehow the lot of workers is going to be improved. My God, you guys aren't just conducting Conservative legislation; you're going further, worse.

The Acting Speaker: It being almost 6 pm, this House stands adjourned until 6:45 pm tonight.

The House adjourned at 1753.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Brant	Levac, Dave (L)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Gerretsen, Hon / L'hon John (L) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing; minister responsible for seniors / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement, ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées
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Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	McGuinty, Hon / L'hon Dalton (L) Premier and President of the Executive Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif, ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales	Thornhill	Racco, Mario G. (L)
Ottawa West-Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest-Nepean	Watson, Hon / L'hon Jim (L) Minister of Consumer and Business Services / ministre des Services aux consommateurs et aux entreprises	Thunder Bay-Atikokan	Mauro, Bill (L)
Ottawa-Orléans	McNeely, Phil (L)	Thunder Bay-Superior	Gravelle, Michael (L)
Ottawa-Vanier	Meilleur, Hon / L'hon Madeleine (L) Minister of Culture, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre de la Culture, ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones	North / Thunder Bay-Superior- Nord	
Oxford	Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Timiskaming-Cochrane	Ramsay, Hon / L'hon David (L) Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles
Parkdale-High Park	Kennedy, Hon / L'hon Gerard (L) Minister of Education / ministre de l'Éducation	Timmins-James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	Bisson, Gilles (ND)
Parry Sound-Muskoka	Miller, Norm (PC)	Toronto Centre-Rosedale / Toronto-Centre-Rosedale	Smitherman, Hon / L'hon George (L) Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Perth-Middlesex	Wilkinson, John (L)	Toronto-Danforth	Churley, Marilyn (ND)
Peterborough	Leal, Jeff (L)	Trinity-Spadina	Marchese, Rosario (ND)
Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge	Arthurs, Wayne (L)	Vaughan-King-Aurora	Sorbara, Hon / L'hon Greg (L) Minister of Finance / ministre des Finances
Prince Edward-Hastings	Parsons, Ernie (L)	Waterloo-Wellington	Arnott, Ted (PC) First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	Yakabuski, John (PC)	Whitby-Ajax	Flaherty, Jim (PC)
Sarnia-Lambton	Di Cocco, Caroline (L)	Willowdale	Zimmer, David (L)
Sault Ste Marie	Oraziotti, David (L)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Pupatello, Hon / L'hon Sandra (L) Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Duguid, Brad (L)	Windsor-St Clair	Duncan, Hon / L'hon Dwight (L) Minister of Energy, Chair of Cabinet, Government House Leader / ministre de l'Énergie, président du Conseil des ministres, leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Scarborough East / Scarborough-Est	Chambers, Hon / L'hon Mary Anne V. (L) Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités	York Centre / York-Centre	Kwinter, Hon / L'hon Monte (L) Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
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Scarborough-Agincourt	Phillips, Hon / L'hon Gerry (L) Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement	York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston	Cordiano, Hon / L'hon Joseph (L) Minister of Economic Development and Trade / ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Scarborough-Rouge River	Curling, Hon / L'hon Alvin (L) Speaker / Président	York West / York-Ouest	Sergio, Mario (L)
Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Dunlop, Garfield (PC)		
Simcoe-Grey	Wilson, Jim (PC)		
St Catharines	Bradley, Hon / L'hon James J. (L) Minister of Tourism and Recreation / ministre du Tourisme et des Loisirs		
St Paul's	Bryant, Hon / L'hon Michael (L) Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones, ministre responsable du Renouveau démocratique		

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

THIRD READINGS

Adams Mine Lake Act, 2004, Bill 49, <i>Mrs Dombrowsky</i> Agreed to.....	3019
---	------

OTHER BUSINESS

Visitors

Mr Jackson	3018
Mr Wilson	3018

TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Jeudi 17 juin 2004

AFFAIRES D'INTÉRÊT PUBLIC ÉMANANT DES DÉPUTÉS

Loi de 2004 modifiant des lois en ce qui concerne la sécurité dans les rues, projet de loi 58, <i>M. Lalonde</i> M. Lalonde	2997, 3005
M. Bisson	2999
Adoptée	3014
Loi de 2004 sur le partage avec les Premières nations des recettes tirées de l'exploitation des ressources, projet de loi 97, <i>M. Bisson</i> Adoptée	3014

PREMIÈRE LECTURE

Loi de 2004 modifiant la Loi sur les droits des aveugles, projet de loi 103, <i>M. Martiniuk</i> Adoptée	3017
---	------

DEUXIÈME LECTURE

Loi de 2004 modifiant la Loi sur les normes d'emploi (heures de travail et autres questions), projet de loi 63, <i>M. Bentley</i> Débat présumé ajourné.....	3050
---	------

TROISIÈME LECTURE

Loi de 2004 sur le lac de la mine Adams, projet de loi 49, <i>M^{me} Dombrowsky</i> Adoptée	3019
--	------

CONTENTS

Thursday 17 June 2004

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Safe Streets Statute Law Amendment Act, 2004, Bill 58, Mr Lalonde	
Mr Lalonde	2997, 3005
Mr Leal	2998
Mr Bisson	2999
Mr Dunlop	3001
Mr McNeely	3002
Mr Brownell	3003
Mr Tascona	3003
Mr Prue	3004
Agreed to	3014
First Nations Resource Revenue Sharing Act, 2004, Bill 97, Mr Bisson	
Mr Bisson	3005, 3013
Mr Oraziotti	3007
Mr Miller	3007
Mr Prue	3009
Mr Brownell	3010
Mr Tascona	3010
Mr Levac	3011
Mr Hampton	3012
Agreed to	3014

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

George Vice	
Mr O'Toole	3014
Calabrese Canadians	
Mr Marchese	3014
Order of St George	
Mr Craitor	3014
Nina Burnham	
Mr Barrett	3015
Special Olympics	
Mr Leal	3015
Liquor licensing	
Mr Runciman	3015
Senior citizens	
Ms Marsales	3015
Immigrants	
Mr Ruprecht	3016
Rural Ontario	
Mrs Mitchell	3016

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

Standing committee on finance and economic affairs	
Mr Wilkinson	3016
Report adopted	3017

FIRST READINGS

Blind Persons' Rights Amendment Act, 2004, Bill 103, Mr Martiniuk	
Agreed to	3017
Mr Martiniuk	3017
Key Aircraft Services Inc. Act, 2004, Bill Pr7, Mrs Jeffrey	
Agreed to	3017

MOTIONS

Standing committees	
Mr Duncan	3017
Agreed to	3018
Standing committee on government agencies	
Mr Duncan	3018
Agreed to	3018
House sittings	
Mr Duncan	3018
Agreed to	3018

ORAL QUESTIONS

Health care services	
Mr Dunlop	3019
Mr McGuinty	3019, 3020
Mr Yakabuski	3019
Mrs Witmer	3020
Ms Martel	3023
Mr Smitherman	3023, 3026
Mr Miller	3026
Health care funding	
Mr Hampton	3021
Mr McGuinty	3021
Ontario budget	
Mr O'Toole	3022
Mr Sorbara	3022
Mr Barrett	3024
Mr McGuinty	3024
Class size	
Mr Duguid	3024
Mr Kennedy	3024
Electricity restructuring	
Mr Hampton	3025
Mr Duncan	3025
Family health teams	
Mr Kular	3025
Mr Smitherman	3025, 3026
Mrs Mitchell	3025
Autism services	
Ms Martel	3026
Mrs Bountrogianni	3027

Cleanup of brownfields

Mr Levac	3027
Mrs Dombrowsky	3027

Trillium Foundation

Mr Sterling	3028
Mr Sorbara	3028

PETITIONS

Property taxation

Mr Ouellette	3028
Mr Leal	3028

Health care services

Mr O'Toole	3029
------------------	------

District of Muskoka

Mr Miller	3029
-----------------	------

Chiropractic services

Mr Flynn	3029
Mr Hardeman	3029
Mr Dunlop	3030, 3031
Mr Ouellette	3030
Mr Yakabuski	3031

Motorcycle insurance

Mr Miller	3030
-----------------	------

Tillsonburg District Memorial Hospital

Mr Hardeman	3030
-------------------	------

Seat belts

Ms Broten	3030
-----------------	------

Cormorant population

Mr Ouellette	3031
--------------------	------

SECOND READINGS

Employment Standards Amendment Act (Hours of Work and Other

Matters), 2004, Bill 63, Mr Bentley	
Mr Milloy	3032, 3036
Mr Qaadri	3033
Mr Dunlop	3034, 3036, 3046, 3049
Ms Horwath	3035, 3044
Mr Wilkinson	3035
Mr Berardinetti	3035
Mr O'Toole	3038
Mrs Witmer	3043
Mr Arthurs	3045
Mr Hampton	3045, 3046, 3049
Mr Leal	3045
Ms Broten	3048
Mr Wong	3049
Debate deemed adjourned	3050

Continued overleaf



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Jeudi 17 juin 2004

Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers



Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 17 June 2004

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 17 juin 2004

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUDGET MEASURES ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004

SUR LES MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES

Mr Sorbara moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 83, An Act to implement Budget measures / Projet de loi 83, Loi mettant en oeuvre certaines mesures budgétaires.

Hon David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I seek unanimous consent to divide the time to 9:20 equally among the three recognized parties and that each party, commencing with the government, then the official opposition and then the third party, will use its allotted block of time in full.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Joseph N. Tascona): Is there unanimous consent? Agreed. Minister.

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): I'm delighted to be able to lead off the debate on third and final reading of this bill. I will be dividing my time among four of my colleagues on this side of the House.

For me, of course, this is an historic, important and, frankly, incredibly moving moment. I want to spend my time simply to make some final comments on this budget and the measures contained in it and the objectives we are trying to achieve and will achieve through this budget.

Might I say at the outset, though, that I was delighted that we were able to arrange consideration of this bill in public hearings, which took place earlier this week. There were a number of deputants who came before the standing committee, and all of the deputants have added to our consideration of the importance of this bill and ultimately its implementation. So I want to thank those who on relatively short notice were able to make submissions to the standing committee.

The point I want to make in the time I have allotted to me is to remind this House and the people listening to this debate what the objectives were for our party and our government as we prepared the budget, which I presented just over a month ago in this House. If you really want to understand what the budget was all about, you need to understand that there were four all-important objectives,

and I think we will have great success in each one of these objectives.

The first, and this is very important, is that we were looking to bring financial health back to the province. What we inherited when we assumed the responsibilities of government on October 23 was a government that was in the midst of a deficit spiral, a government whose finances, notwithstanding very strong economic growth over the past eight or nine years, had fallen into deficit, and had fallen into a deficit not for a particular year, but had fallen into what's called a structural deficit. That means that in the absence of any particular or important intervention, this province was going to continue to run up debts year after year after year.

So our first and primary objective was to take steps, and we did so by bringing forward a comprehensive plan, to get us out of this debt spiral; and yes, that did involve revenue measures in the form of the Ontario health premium, and I'm going to say a word or two about that premium toward the end of my remarks. But just to make the point again, getting ourselves out of a financial crisis was central to the way we designed and ultimately presented the budget.

1850

The second objective was to ensure that through the expenditures we placed in the budget, we would be making real progress in strengthening the public services that people look to this government and this province to provide, notably in the areas of health care and education. For example—and we've said it over and over again in this House—with the measures and the funds we've allotted to health care, we will be able to begin an historic transformation of health care, so that the system people turn to when they are sick or frail is much more rooted in higher-quality services delivered at a community level. You will see, as we implement the budget, historic new investments in home care—some 400 million additional dollars in home care. You will see additional expenditures in long-term care, those facilities that look after our moms and dads right across the province. You'll see additional investments in transforming primary care so that we are moving away from the classic model of the hospital bed and the doctor's office to a community-based level of care through community health centres, through family health networks and facilities that are right in communities.

The budget also presents historic new investments in public education, and in a sense, for some of us this is one of the most important things the budget does. Our schools right across Ontario over the course of the past

nine years have been war zones. This budget declares peace in the classroom and starts to rebuild our classrooms with new respect for teachers, with new investments, so that we will have smaller class sizes in the early years, so that every elementary school in the province will have a specialist in math and a specialist in literacy, so that we will begin to invest in rehabilitating schools that are crumbling right across the province.

So the second objective was that we start to rebuild public services.

The third objective—and I think that so many of my Liberal caucus colleagues repeated this objective to me leading up to the budget that it was the one that I think we put special emphasis on—was that the budget had to speak to and had to provide for those among us in Ontario who are most vulnerable. I was so proud of the fact that for the first time in some 11 years we could increase the level of assistance to those who are disabled; we could increase the level of assistance to those who live on social assistance for a period in their lives when they are down on their luck or for some other reason are not able to find work. That was the first time in some 11 years that a government in Ontario has been able to do that. And we were able to allocate some \$25 million to children's mental health, an area that had been ignored for years in this province.

So the third objective was to make sure that the budget spoke to all Ontarians, no matter what their circumstances, and we were able to achieve that.

The fourth objective was that we were able in the budget to build a new and stronger foundation for the next generation of economic growth, for the next economy in Ontario. We were able to do that through a number of significant measures. It wasn't simply our commitment to rebuild the electricity sector, which had been allowed to fall into disrepair over the course of the past five years, since 1999. As I said on budget day, the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal will be presenting in this House a 10-year plan to start to rebuild Ontario's infrastructure.

Hon Mr Caplan: Hear, hear.

Hon Mr Sorbara: I hear the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal supporting that notion.

In northern Ontario, we were able to make very significant provisions to start to rebuild the economy of the north. We were able to include within the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities new investments in apprenticeships so that we could have the workforce necessary to strengthen our economy, and I think we've been very successful in that regard.

I should tell you I'm quite proud of the fact that recently, over the past several days, all three rating agencies, those that evaluate Ontario budgets and the strength of our economy and our public initiatives, have issued releases saying that they confirm our credit rating. They've said that in times of real stress on our expenditures, the Ontario government, under the leadership of Dalton McGuinty, has taken the right course in preparing the budget.

This budget was not without controversy; there's no doubt about that. I just want to mention perhaps the single, most high-profile controversy of all in the budget, and that is our determination, although we said we didn't think it would be necessary, to bring forward initiatives to raise more revenue in this province. I want to tell my friends in this House and you, Mr Speaker, that in a sense it would have been much easier to say, "You know what? We made an election commitment not to raise additional revenues, so that's the only commitment we'll take." But had we gone down that course, every single member of this House would have to admit that that alternative would involve an historic abandonment of the very responsibilities we have as a Parliament, and as a government, to strengthen our public services.

This year, the Ontario health premium will raise some \$1.6 billion for our treasury. Let's assume that we decided not to go down that avenue. Let's just understand what the consequences would have been. To eliminate \$1.6 billion from our balance sheet would be the equivalent to closing down the entire community college system. That would save us \$1 billion. We could let 10,000 schoolteachers go, give them a pink slip. That would have saved us \$1 billion dollars. These kinds of cutbacks in public services are what Ontario experienced in 1995, when the Conservatives came to government. They slashed and they burned and they left public services on a road to ruin. And what the people said during the election of last October was that they wanted that policy in Ontario to end, and they wanted a government that would begin to reconstruct these services and prepare us for the 21st century.

I've been around the province for the past month, after the budget, north, south, east and west, talking about what's in our budget, where we're going and how we're going to meet these objectives. I've said to crowds large and small that it was not easy for us to bring forward a budget that raised additional revenues in the form of a premium. But I made the point as well that failure to do that would have been a failure of our public responsibilities, given the circumstances that we inherited, to the people of this province. I think I can tell my colleagues in this House that as we begin to implement the measures in this budget and we see a reduction of waiting times for those who need critical surgeries, and we see millions of Ontarians finally have access to primary health care on an urgent basis, and when we see our kids getting free vaccinations, and when we see our classrooms come to life again, and as we witness the beginning of a new era of construction in public transit, roads and sewers, and when we see vitality coming back into our power system and investors saying, "Yes, we want to invest in Ontario because we're satisfied that they've got the electricity thing figured out, and that they've got a high quality health care system," and when we see new life coming to the economy of northern Ontario, and when we see rural Ontario find their place in this great province through the initiatives that we've taken, I think that when we start to see all of that and the positive

impact it will have, members of this House, on all sides, will agree that the tough measures we've taken in this budget, the new course we've set, and our ability to make those decisions and stick with them, and when they see four years down the road that this province has put behind us the deficits, the debts and the interest costs that would have implied, and when those outside the province say, "Things are really starting to happen in Ontario," members of this House will agree that the budget we presented on May 18 was the right budget for Ontario, and passage of this bill today by way of third reading will confirm that.

1900

Mr. Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): I'm delighted to join in the third reading debate of Bill 83, An Act to implement Budget measures. In fact, I'm more than delighted, I'm honoured to follow the finance minister after making his comments today, and tell the finance minister that, like all of us in this caucus, we are 100% behind the very tough but important decisions we've had to make for the province of Ontario. It is real leadership that the finance minister has provided this province, tough but important leadership if we want to change the direction of this province and make sure that we bring the positive changes we set out to bring to Ontario last fall.

Let's put this debate into some context. Last fall, we were elected on an agenda for change: change to health care, change to education, change in the relationship that municipalities have across the province and change in the way the vulnerable across this province are treated. We also said during that election, and the finance minister and the Premier have indicated this as well, that we weren't going to raise taxes. But when we arrived here, one of the first things we did was hire a former Provincial Auditor to determine what the budget deficit was that we were inheriting and we found out at that point that it was about a \$5.6-billion deficit. It turned out to be a \$6-billion deficit when all was said and done.

We went through a series of emotions, just like, I think, the people of Ontario are going through right now. First of all, we were angry at the previous government because we all know that they said there was not going to be a deficit. Right up to the moment when the people cast the last ballot in the last provincial election, they said there'd be zero deficit. And we know that turned out to be not true. We know that's had a major impact, when we came here, on our ability to do the things we wanted to do at the time and at the pace we wanted to do them.

So we were angry. The anger emotion soon dissipated into an emotion of frustration. We were frustrated because we had lots of great things that we wanted to do with this province, lots of important changes, but we were frustrated as we were trying to figure out how we could implement this agenda given the situation that was dumped in our laps by the previous government.

That emotion soon left because we realized that we had a job to do. We had to face up to this deficit. It wasn't just going to go away. So it became an emotion of

determination. We were determined to get by this, determined to get the fiscal life of this province back on track and determined to implement the very important changes that we set out to implement last fall.

Our choices were stark. We could have continued the Tory and NDP approach and nickel-and-dimed our way through this situation and, maybe four years from now, if we hit that structural deficit further and further, we could get ourselves re-elected. Maybe. But that would have accomplished absolutely nothing because all the important changes that we needed to bring about in this province couldn't happen.

We could have tried to balance the budget and freeze revenues. That would have required us to cut back on taxes. The Minister of Finance said just a few minutes ago that for us to balance the budget we would have had to cut right out one in four hospitals across this province. We would have had to totally wipe out the college education system. We would have had to fire 10,000 teachers to get those kinds of dollars. Totally unacceptable. There was no way we were going to go there and there's no way the people of Ontario would have wanted us to go there.

So we looked at a third option: raising revenues through a progressive health premium. Recognizing that this was, indeed, contrary to our election commitment not to raise taxes, recognizing that we were going to take some political heat for doing it, we stepped up to the plate nonetheless because we knew it was the right thing to do for the province of Ontario, given the circumstances that we had inherited. I'm confident that the people of Ontario will recognize, once the emotions have died down, that we made the right decision for this province.

There are two key questions that the people of Ontario will have to come to terms with. The first is, did the Liberals mislead the public by committing to not raise taxes during the last election? Let me tell you, the answer to that is absolutely not. There is no way we could fulfill that commitment because of the Tory deficit that had been left for us, that we inherited. They hid that deficit. They knew it was there. They hid it. The fact of the matter is, it was there nonetheless, and we had to deal with it, and that's why we had to make some tough decisions. We couldn't wish that Tory deficit away, so we had to adjust our agenda; we had to adjust our program. I think we did it in a manner that is in the best interests of the province.

The second question is, should we have known? I keep hearing this from time to time from the opposition: We should have known. There's no way the opposition would have known the state of the finances of the province.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh (Halton): You did know. Ask Gerry Phillips.

Mr. Duguid: I'll tell you, even the very backbenchers for the government party at the time didn't know the state of the finances. There may have been a few that did. No doubt the Premier probably did, no doubt the Minister of Finance probably did, but—

Mr Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Is there a quorum?

Clerk at the Table (Mr Todd Decker): Quorum is present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Proceed.

Mr Duguid: We didn't know that the deficit was going to be \$6 billion. I bet you the Tory backbenchers didn't even know about it, but obviously the government of the day must have, and that's the mess they left us with.

But we're going to turn the corner. We're going to make the changes we have to make in health care: more doctors, 8,000 more full-time nurses, stable funding for hospitals, reduced waiting lists, more surgeries and new MRIs, free vaccinations for children for pneumonia, meningitis and chicken pox. For students, \$2.6 billion to fix our crumbling schools, get rid of those leaky roofs, more textbooks for kids, 1,000 new teachers, smaller classes in the early grades, a two-year tuition freeze for colleges and universities. For communities, \$3.3 billion for local roads, two cents a litre from the existing gas tax for public transit, increased numbers of affordable housing, more meat and water inspectors.

I could go on but my time is running out. We made the right decision, the only decision we could make that was in the best interests of the people of this province. I'm proud to stand by this budget. The people of Ontario over time will recognize that we made the right decision for the province of Ontario.

Mrs Liz Sandals (Guelph-Wellington): I'm delighted to stand and speak to our budget tonight. This was a budget in which we had to make some difficult choices, but I truly believe we have made the right choices. Because we have made the difficult decision to introduce the Ontario health premium, we are going to be able to improve health services for the public of Ontario. We are going to be able to improve health services in hospitals: more cardiac procedures, more cataract surgeries, more joint replacements, more nurses to take care of you while you recover. We're also going to improve health care in the community, where we want to have service for folks: more home care, better service in long-term care, more funding for community mental health, more funding for children's mental health, more vaccinations for children, a whole host of new services. In addition—this is interesting—this year we will be raising an additional \$1.6 billion through our new tax. That list of things I just gave you and more will be \$2.2 billion more in spending on health care.

1910

The opposition has been talking a lot lately about the fact that we are also going to improve water and sewage treatment and somehow that's unrelated to health care. Note that I just said that community health care and hospital health care is going to soak up more than our increase in the health tax. But they've been very critical of the fact that we're going to spend more money on sewage and water treatment. In fact, we are committed, in addition to our health care spending, to spending \$257

million extra on water and sewage treatment. I'd like to talk about that, because sewage treatment—

Mr Chudleigh: It's in the health care budget.

Mrs Sandals: No, outside the health care budget. Sewage is not a very sexy subject, but I'd like to think about it for a few minutes.

Mr Hampton seems to have a very short memory. He seems to have forgotten about Walkerton. In fact, he even seems to have forgotten about his own campaign platform. In his own campaign platform last September, he said, "Get back to the job of helping people maintain their health in the first place, not just treating the sick.... A healthier population means more efficient use of our health care system. Our plan includes ... protecting the quality of drinking water at source." In fact, Mr Hampton seemed to think a few months ago that water and sewage treatment were quite important. But then he forgot about it.

So let's just cast our minds back to Walkerton, where six people died and countless children are still suffering from kidney-related health problems due to the illness they had at the time. Why? Because their drinking water was unsafe. Why was their drinking water unsafe? A failure of water treatment; a failure of sewage treatment; a failure of nutrient management treatment. I think the public remembers that.

But let's cast our minds back a little bit farther. I think a lot of us, when we were in high school history, probably saw those etchings in history books of tenements in 18th- and 19th-century Europe and the people leaning out to throw the slop into the street, and then on the next page, you got the wagons hauling away folks who had died of the latest plague. Hundreds of thousands of people died in European cities. Why? Because they didn't have clean drinking water. They died because they had diseases that were borne in the drinking water.

One of the most important public health advances in the history of medicine is providing safe drinking water. Today, when community development folks go into Third World villages, do you know what one of the first things is that they do? They provide a community well from which people can get clean drinking water. So we make no apologies for focusing \$257 million on water and sewage treatment.

Let's think about sewage treatment. I live in the Grand River watershed, and when that treated sewage leaves Guelph, it goes downstream to Cambridge to Mr Martiniuk's riding, where the people of Cambridge are going to drink that water. When the sewage leaves Cambridge, it goes downstream to Mr Levac's riding in Brant, and when the sewage leaves Mr Levac's riding in Brant, it goes downstream to Mr Barrett's riding, one of the people who is yelling at me here because I'm concerned about sewage treatment. And do you know what happens in Mr Barrett's riding? They pump the water out of the river so they can drink it. I would think that the Conservative members would be very concerned that they have good sewage treatment in my city, in Cambridge, in Brantford and in Kitchener-Waterloo, because ultimately—

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): But you don't call it health care.

Mrs Sandals: We're not calling it health care; we're calling it health prevention. In addition to our health care budget, we are providing that.

What about these sewer pipes? Think about what happens with old sewer pipes when they crack and leak. Do you know what happens when sewage pipes leak? Raw, untreated human sewage leaks out of the pipes and leaches into the groundwater. In my community, we actually pump our water from groundwater, from wells, and do you know something? I think it is important to my constituents and to the people of Ontario that we have safe water, clean water, and we make no apologies for investing \$257 million in clean water for the people of Ontario, in addition to all the other improvements we will be making in health care in Ontario.

I will be supporting this budget.

Mr Phil McNeely (Ottawa-Orléans): I'm pleased to have this opportunity to speak to our budget, delivered some four weeks ago. I'll read from an article written in 2002 before the SARS crisis, before the mad cow problems and before 9/11. It's called *The Common (Non)Sense Revolution*: "It is the entire financial program of the Harris Tories that has led Ontario onto dangerous ground. The reality is that, if government revenues are not allowed to rise during good times"—which you had and you wasted—"given away, if you will, in the form of tax cuts—then services can never improve and, quite importantly for economic conservatives, the debt will never be paid."

In fact, during that period you added \$21 billion to the debt in the 1990s and you gave us the gift of a \$6.2-billion debt in 2003-04. That's \$27 billion of new debt in this province. You know, you could have done like Prime Minister Martin did. In the same good times, he paid down \$50 billion of our debt. You raised it \$27 billion. "[I]f higher revenues are bled off through tax cuts while expenditures ... rise, what happens when the economy declines and revenues cease to go up?" That's what happened; that's exactly the point. You caused that. In the same good times, Prime Minister Martin paid down \$50 billion of the Canadian debt.

What did you do in your budget? You sold off assets at fire sale prices to balance the books when you found your revenues were too low, so we had to pick up the pieces. Picking up the pieces means getting more revenues, and how did we do that? It takes courage. We increased taxes. We had to clean up your mess. That's what we had to do. It takes courage to get revenues up.

Interjections.

Mr McNeely: Sell those undisclosed assets? What were your assets? Were you going to sell the Canadian side of Niagara Falls? You gave away the 407. Were you going put tolls on the 401 and sell it? Maybe you were thinking of selling the Great Lakes. You could have gotten into that.

The deficit didn't happen in 2003. In 2000 and 2001, in good times, they had to reduce the revenues two times

so there was no room for a downturn. Unlike Prime Minister Martin, the Tories cut revenues. When Ontario came into bad times with SARS, 9/11 and mad cow, there were no rainy day funds. Prime Minister Martin had those rainy day funds. He was ready for it. He's had balanced budgets for seven years and he paid down the debt, in addition.

It's interesting—and this was just a year ago, in June 2003, the estimates, this new committee that I'm going to be on, and I was just reading some of it. This is Minister Ecker: "This is our fifth consecutive balanced budget, and no other government has balanced ... budgets.... Just as important, we have achieved our commitment to pay down the debt by \$5 billion"—never done; a \$10-billion lie in June 2003; a \$10-billion difference between reality and what this minister said when she came to estimates committee. That was in the middle of the buildup to the last election, when we had this type of dreaming and fantasizing by the Minister of Finance from your side. No wonder you delivered your budget at the Magna plant. I'm surprised you didn't go to Disney World. It would have been more real.

1920

In addition to the debt that shows, there's a social debt of kids lost in the school system because of poor funding, kids giving up on college and university because the costs are too high; and yes, seven people who died in Walkerton because they fired the water inspectors and slashed the environmental budget. That's what you did.

Something should be included in our financial statements that looks after the deterioration of infrastructure. That should be included. Because you took your funding away from municipalities, you have all the municipalities underfunding your infrastructure. The city of Ottawa spends \$16 million in asphalt resurfacing. Their studies tell them they should be spending \$26 billion—\$10 billion under, because you will not help municipalities; not like the days of Davis, Peterson or Rae, when the municipalities were helped. You took away all that help. These figures come straight from management systems. They're not pie in the sky. They're what our infrastructure needs in order to sustain it. Underfunding of \$10 million or \$11 million just in Ottawa, year after year, and the potholes throughout the province are starting to show up; that was your policy of underfunding communities.

What about our neighbour—he's not here—for Nepean-Carleton, the former minister of lost generation? He ran up debt and energy and at the same time he ran down generation, so we got our blackout. He claims it was the ministry he enjoyed most, and no wonder he enjoyed it. By my own calculations of the debt you added, because you didn't maintain your infrastructure, your debt increased by \$27 billion. But in addition: schools, \$8 billion of new debt because you wouldn't maintain them; roads, \$4 billion because you wouldn't maintain them; bridges—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Go ahead.

Mr McNeely: So we can add that \$25 billion to the \$27 billion, and it's \$52 billion that you cost this province, that you put us more into debt in the last few years. And where's Harper? He's going to cut \$57 billion from the taxes; typical Harris: same thing. They will cut services, they will cut health care, and his representatives in Ottawa are now coming clean. The city councillors, because they've had this wonderful announcement that we're going to get into light rail transit, have asked him, "Will you honour the agreements that were made by the province and the federal government in Ottawa a few months ago?" Here's the answer they got, and this is from Pierre Poilievre: "My policy is firm. It will honour all signed contracts made by the previous government for infrastructure, bridges and transit initiatives." They know there are no signed agreements yet. These are commitments that are made by politicians, commitments that are in the works that will take some time, but he's backing out of them. Here's what Jan Harder, I think, a councillor from Nepean says, "I must say that I continue to be disappointed by your lack of a clear and unequivocal commitment to the funding of the O-Train expansion to south Ottawa, the Congress Centre, and Fallowfield and Woodroffe Roads improvements.

"You, sir, are skirting around the issue." They will not make the commitment.

Mr Sterling: On a point of order, Speaker: Is there any requirement for the Minister of Finance—

Interjection: Normie, come on.

Mr Sterling:—part of his bill—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: That's not a point of order.

Mr McNeely: So whether it's Harper or Harris, they're coming out clear: no more help for communities; no more help for cities; let the infrastructure deteriorate. That's where it's going. They like to think they're good managers. How did they run up an additional \$52 billion in debt in their eight years here? Ask yourself.

Taxes are difficult. It takes courage to tax. But we cannot have our children pay for our standard of living. We must pay our own way, and that's what the Liberal budget is all about: paying our own way, getting the services back and looking after this province of Ontario and making it great.

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): I just want to say, first of all, the member for Ottawa-Orléans has had a very distinguished career representing his home base of Cumberland and that beautiful part of eastern Ontario. As part of our consultation process dealing with Bill 83, I had the good fortune to visit beautiful communities like Embrun, Cumberland and Rockland. I went there with the member for Glengarry-Prescott-Russell, Jean-Marc Lalonde. I remember we sat in meetings with ordinary citizens in that part of Ontario, which I think is one of the most historic parts of Ontario, and they were explaining to us some of the difficulties they were having living in these communities. One of the things they kept coming up with was the fact that they could not cope with things

like downloading; they could not cope with a provincial government that wouldn't listen.

That's why this bill that's before us, Bill 83, has some very significant changes, and these are changes that were not ordained from on high at Queen's Park. These came from discussions with mayors and ordinary citizens at public meetings. Our own committee travelled across the province listening to people. In Bill 83 there are some significant changes that are part of the budget. The first section it changed was the Assessment Act. What we heard universally across the province was that the assessment system in Ontario is broken; it isn't functioning properly. It is the most complicated system, which is causing undue stress, not only to the taxpayers, but to the clerks and treasurers. They are having incredible problems with MPAC.

As a result of these dialogues, we came up with some solutions. In this bill we're not going to totally repair an assessment system that is extremely complex and extremely difficult to repair, but we have, for the first time, decided to delay assessments next year. We're not going to proceed with assessments, so people will be able to catch up and the changes and improvements will be able to be processed. So in the upcoming calendar year there will not be a new round of assessments.

We've heard the horror stories of assessments taking place in sugar bushes. We've heard horror stories about people who were trying to appeal their assessment and the deadlines were inappropriate. We were told by the municipalities that it was impossible for the province to assess 4.3 million properties in a couple of months. Therefore, in this bill we've changed the assessment cycle so that the valuation date will now be January 1. This will give ordinary citizens six months to ask for reconsideration of their assessment, and then be able to appeal it.

The way it was before, it was just impossible. We had a lot of anxiety. We had extra costs to municipalities. So this has been incurred, and the municipalities—Hazel McCallion of Mississauga, the mayors of small communities, the mayor of Oakville, AMO—have said this is a good first step in trying to make sense of this assessment mess that was left us. In this bill there are some changes that have been roundly applauded by the stakeholders, who say, "Thanks for listening to us." So that's in this bill.

Also, drug interchangeability and dispensing fee: As you know, the minister said his intention was to ensure that we could bring generic drugs on to the formulary so that we could bring some of the costs down and, at the same time, offer a greater variety of drugs. This will allow the minister to bring on generic drugs more quickly.

We had one question raised in the House, and I think it was a good question, about whether the minister could delist. An amendment was put forward by the minister to ensure that that couldn't happen. It was unequivocal that this was just giving the minister power to bring on a new formulary and not giving more power to delist. So that is

in this bill. That's going save millions of dollars and bring on cheaper generic drugs as a result.

1930

In this bill we're also giving tenants in this province a break. Usually there's an automatic pass-through of an increase on rents. Because we're reviewing the Tenant Protection Act, that automatic increase of 2% will not be passed on. That's also in this bill.

There are also changes in the Tobacco Tax Act, which bring our tobacco taxes more in line with the provincial average. That helps us pay for the costs borne by the health system for tobacco-related diseases.

That's all in Bill 83 in an attempt to try and ensure that the province is managed in a way whereby we'll be able to enhance services, because that's what this bill is about.

One poignant thing that I think is the hallmark of this budget was when Minister Smitherman went to the health sciences centre in Hamilton to announce the immunization program for children so that children don't have to suffer the consequences of chicken pox, meningitis and pneumonia. A pediatrician came up to Minister Smitherman and said, "You know, with the stroke of a pen, by allowing immunization for children, you've done more to help children than I've done in 30 years as a practising pediatrician."

Interjections.

Mr Colle: I know the members opposite are trying to minimize the immunization program, but immunization of children is something that needs to be done. It's all about transforming health care.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Simcoe North, can you just settle down so I can hear the member speak.

Mr Colle: It's amazing that the immunization of children will evoke such reaction from the opposition. I just don't understand that.

I would say that this bill, along with our budget, is not only about writing more cheques for health care, it's about getting rid of the silos and barriers that exist in health care so that we can have family teams of doctors; we can have money reinvested in community health centres. We can also have money invested—the great work done by the member for North Bay; reinvested \$190 million in our nursing homes, long-term care so that our seniors have the respect in those homes. We have heard of the deplorable conditions in nursing homes. Through this budget, we are also going to be able to invest over \$400 million in having more home care so that seniors can stay in their homes and they won't be a burden in the emergency room or the hospital.

As I said, this is not just about putting money into the silos as usual; it's about the transformation of the health care system, which is extremely expensive but essential. We are trying to say, through the health premium, that that money will go to delivering health care more comprehensively to those who need it, and not just through the traditional methods, which are good, but we need to meet the challenges of the future.

If you look at the demographics that are going to hit Ontario, all of Canada, the growing population like all of

us here, we're going to have to use our innovation. We're going to have to use our community-based systems, whether it be family health teams, whether it be home care or community health centres, whether we start using an approach that says all communities across Ontario deserve a family doctor or a family health team. We had to make some difficult choices. For instance, we had a group appear before us, the Canadian Mental Health Association, Ontario division. They said, "This budget gives us hope, because for 12 years"—

Interjections.

Mr Colle: I know mental health doesn't seem to be a priority again with the other side, but these people said that for 12 years the mental health in this province has not been given any attention. So whether it's children's mental health, where we have added \$26 million, or community mental health, they said, "This budget gives us hope for the first time."

Another thing, in terms of prevention and transformation, is that we are now taking over more responsibility for public health. We are uploading 75% to the province because we believe that you can't afford another game of Russian roulette with SARS, or something like it. So we are reinvesting in public health and putting provincial money into it through this budget.

We are also extremely concerned about education, as you said. I've talked about health, but as you know, we've made an historic reinvestment in public education of over \$2.2 billion so our children cannot only have good community health, but our schools will again be clean, there will be more teachers in our schools, there will be programs in our schools where teachers will all be there with a feeling of respect, and it will benefit the community as a whole.

As I said, this budget is certainly not one that everybody agrees with, but it's a definite statement that our priorities are clear. Our priorities are not tax cuts, not trying to win favour with everybody, but we're trying to say that we have to fix health care, we have to fix education, we have to fix our cities and invest in those three basic, primary needs so that we can make this province economically sound, so that we can generate more economic growth and prosperity, so that we can continue to invest in our cities, in our rural communities, so that we can continue to invest in the economic health of Ontario and the medical health of all Ontarians. And we're trying to do our best with this budget.

Mr Sterling: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Given Mr Colle's concern about our maple syrup producers in Ontario, I ask for unanimous consent to call without notice second and third reading of Bill 46, An Act to amend the Assessment Act, and that we have the vote immediately. I ask for unanimous consent.

The Acting Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? No.

Further debate?

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): As this government rushes to silence the criticism of this dishonest budget, our finance committee members, in

that spirit of accuracy, attempted, to no avail, numerous amendments to reveal the truth of this budget to the people of Ontario. For instance, we proposed an amendment in section 17 of the act to strike out "a new tax called the Ontario health premium," and replace it with the more accurate "a new tax called the Dalton McGuinty broken-promise tax." This amendment never saw the light of day until now because of time allocation. We tried again, proposing to replace the same section with "a new tax called the gouge the middle class tax"; also, "a new tax called the Paul-Martin-wouldn't-help-Ontario tax"; even "a new tax called the Ontario sewer pipe tax." All attempts to insert a little accuracy, a little honesty and truth in the Budget Measures Act were suppressed by this particular government. We know why. The Liberal broken promise—broken record—is there for all taxpayers, for all working families to see. It's plain as the long nose on a wooden boy's face. Using the words of Jack Nicholson, the Liberals "can't handle the truth."

1940

As we debate this budget, I recall that, back in December, I read into the record a cautionary tale about a boy carved from wood who had a difficult time when it came to the matter of telling the truth. It was my hope that members of this government—as children of all ages do—would come away with a new-found respect for keeping promises and telling the truth. However, the introduction of the 2004 budget clearly underlines the fact that that evening's lesson fell on deaf ears.

This government has tinkered with their promises in the past, but this budget represents the big whopper of them all, solidifying the Liberal reputation as a promise-breaking machine that bears little accountability to pledges they made during the election: budget hikes, deficits, delisting of health services, two-tier health care, no hiring of either officers or teachers in 2004. The list goes on and on.

It is clear that there is much more work to be done in impressing on this government the importance of keeping your word. The people of Ontario know the moral of the story. It's borne out in the opinion poll that indicates that only 9% feel that McGuinty is doing a good job. Clearly, those who claim to represent people as a provincial government still have a long way to go when it comes to grasping the honesty thing.

I would like to open again a storybook I opened a number of nights ago and use some examples long taught to children with respect to the significance of honesty, to help explain exactly what the people of Ontario are trying to tell this government. I refer to *The Book of Virtues*. There is a chapter titled "Honesty," and it begins:

"To be honest is to be real, genuine, authentic and bona fide. To be dishonest is to be partly feigned, forged, fake or fictitious. Honesty expresses both self-respect and respect for others. Dishonesty fully respects neither oneself nor others. Honesty imbues lives with openness, reliability and candour; it expresses a disposition to live in the light. Dishonesty seeks shade, cover or concealment. It is a disposition to live partly in the dark." I

would submit this is where the Liberal brain trust has fashioned this particular document. They knew they would break that trust, the faith held by the people of Ontario.

The Book of Virtues has a series of pieces on the theme of honesty. There's a poem titled "The Boy Who Never Told a Lie."

Once there was a little boy,
With curly hair and pleasant eye—
A boy who always told the truth,
And never, never told a lie.
And when he trotted off to school,
The children all about would cry,
"There goes the curly-headed boy—
The boy that never tells a lie."
And everybody loved him so,
Because he always told the truth,
That every day, as he grew up,
'Twas said, "There goes an honest youth."

This government would have done well to listen to these lessons of long ago. It seems somewhere along the line they have forgotten the importance of keeping one's word. I can tell you that the people in Ontario have not forgotten those lessons; hence the 9% failing grade. There is a price to be paid for breaking promises. Clearly the Premier of this province is not a man of his word.

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I've been listening very carefully to the member opposite and I know that he's skirting around the parliamentary language of this place. I think that last statement went over the line.

The Acting Speaker: I'll listen. Go ahead.

Mr Barrett: We've all heard the tale of Honest Abe. President Lincoln earned his reputation for honesty in both private life and public life. Honesty is sorely needed in Liberal Ontario.

In Horatio Alger's tale Abraham Lincoln, *The Backwoods Boy*, comes this tale of financial honesty.

"One day a woman came into the store and purchased sundry articles. They footed up two dollars and six and a quarter cents, or the young clerk thought they did.

"But the young storekeeper, not feeling quite sure as to the accuracy of his calculation, added up the items once more. To his dismay, he found that the sum total should have been but \$2.

"The money must be paid back," he decided.

"The young man knew she lived between two and three miles away.... He walked to the residence of his customer, explained the matter, paid over the six and a quarter cents, and returned satisfied."

There are many in this province who expect just that kind of honesty. They were told during the election that they wouldn't be paying more, and yet they are being hit. They're being hit with a regressive health tax that they will add to their income tax bill. They ask, "Why can't this government be a little more honest, like Honest Abe, and only charge us what we were told we would be charged with in the first place?"

There's another tale about another President, the first President of the United States, George Washington. People know this story. My time is short. I won't talk about the tale of the cherry tree; that's for another evening.

I would like to conclude that it's time for someone on that side of the House to take a page from George Washington, take a page from Honest Abe's book: Stand up for the truth and honesty in government by taking this broken-promise document off the table and go back to the drawing board.

Mr John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): I'm pleased to have the opportunity once again to speak to this terrible bill. I hope you'll excuse me, Mr Speaker; tonight it is very warm in here and I'm not wearing a jacket. But it is probably quite appropriate that it is warm in here tonight, because on May 18 the people of this province got burned. They got scorched by this government and the finance minister's budget that was tabled in this House on May 18. He called this bill a historic budget, and it is a historic budget.

Let's just talk about what it's done for the Liberal Party. This party here in Ontario is languishing around in the 20-some percentile range at this point. The Premier is at 9%, and this is a government that won 72 seats on October 2, based on false pretences that they ran on.

That's not the only effect. What did it do for their friends in Ottawa? Let's go back to November, when they anointed Paul Martin as Prime Minister. What were they saying? "Massive majority awaits the Liberals. It may be a record. It could exceed 220 seats." Those were the polls out there in November, and that was the Liberal Party's own forecast. Are we now going to get 220 Liberal seats? This party has gone down to the 20-some per cent range, the Premier is at 9% and Paul Martin is going down to defeat on June 28. He will probably be resigning as Liberal leader. The most embarrassing showing by a federal leader in history—to go into the election with that kind of lead and blow it—and he can thank anchor McGuinty for its going down.

Hon Mr Caplan: Speaker, I believe that was Kim Campbell.

The Acting Speaker: Go ahead.

Mr Yakabuski: For the record, Kim Campbell didn't enter the election with the lead, believe me. There were no polls that indicated that Kim Campbell was going to win that election. Maybe you can't remember that far back, but I sure can. Paul Martin—that's another story.

Let's go back to last year. They're talking about this deficit. All they hang this whole thing on is this so-called deficit they inherited. They came into this—

Interjection: Oh, come on.

Mr Yakabuski: I have never heard of a company that does a fiscal year in six months.

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): Oh, Liberals do.

1950

Mr Yakabuski: Liberals do. Liberals want you to believe that halfway through the year, if things aren't going well, you should just quit, not do a thing, and hope

that at the end of the year, somehow a little bird flew over and dropped in a few billion dollars. It doesn't happen that way. If you're not making your payments at home, if the expenses are higher than revenues halfway through the year, you've got to make some changes. You've got to make some adjustments.

What did this government do? It sat there across on the other side and twiddled its thumbs and did nothing. It just spun its wheels, and it kept saying, "We didn't know about this. It came as a complete surprise."

But in September, when Dalton McGuinty signed the taxpayer protection pledge, he was directly asked, "There's speculation out there, Mr McGuinty, that there may be some fiscal problems." "That doesn't matter," he said. "We may have to delay the implementation of some of our programs, but we will not run a deficit." You know what that was, eh? Something that Pinocchio fellow was always doing.

Where does it leave us now? This is the last day for us to stand up and speak for the people of Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke and speak for the people of Ontario. They have shut us down. They've effectively neutered us as far as a democratic force, and we—

Mr Dunlop: There's the boat anchor.

Mr Yakabuski: There's the anchor, sinking the good ship Liberal.

Mr John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'm sure it was the previous government that delisted vasectomies.

The Acting Speaker: That isn't a point of order. Continue. Let's go.

Mr Yakabuski: I'm glad I got mine in long before that.

Let's see what's going to happen tonight. Tonight, we will witness legislated, legalized larceny, because that's what this government is doing. Tonight, it's going to pass this budget that is going to rip the hearts out of working Ontarians in this province and, on the way down, as they're dropping to the floor, they'll have their pockets picked.

This is what this government has done to the people of Ontario. But on top of that, they've added a little salt to the wound, a little insult to injury. Yes, now they're going to tell us about this record investment they're going to make in health care, but in fact they're only putting a quarter of a billion or so of that into sewer pipes. If we were having a little game of Clue here in the Legislature tonight, I would say that Colonel McGuinty did it in the Legislature with the sewer pipe.

I want to wind up because I have other colleagues who have some very serious points to make as well.

Interjections.

Mr Yakabuski: Promises, promises. For goodness' sake, I believe there is some decency left over there. Remember what you promised. Remember what your campaign said. Remember the commitment you made to the people of Ontario. You have one chance and one chance only tonight. I'm asking all of those Liberals with

consciences to vote against this budget tonight. Give us another chance. We'll come up with something better.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member from Oshawa.

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I very much appreciate the opportunity to speak tonight. It must be late on a Thursday. You can tell. Certainly, people are fired up tonight.

You know, it's somewhat back to the future. We're back in the time when a budget comes around and things are going up. With the previous government, it used to be that at budget time, it was what was going down. Now we're back to the time when things are going up.

We heard the government members speak about a number of things. We heard one member speak about the \$257 million for sewage and water. We heard another speaker speak about \$26 million for children's mental health in all new funding that was being allocated.

Not only that, we heard about \$2.2 billion that was being spent in education. If the taxes were to be increased to balance the budget, then I ask the government and the people out there in the province of Ontario, where is the new money coming from, the \$2.2 billion, \$257 million, \$26 million just mentioned here tonight by government members? I think if they check, and the people at large will very well know, it's going to add up to about \$5.6 billion.

Government members spoke about crumbling infrastructure. I can tell you, as a member in 1999, I certainly saw a large number of schools in my riding close. We had anywhere from seven to 12 at that time because of riding boundary changes and things like that. In 2003, during the election, the people of Ontario saw the benefits. They saw the new schools that were being built, whether it was Queen Elizabeth, Village Union or all the other ones in our community, and the money that was invested in our community. That was taking place at that time.

They talked about new development and infrastructure coming to the province. In our area, we've got the new cancer centre. We've got 401 interchanges. We've got Pinewood. We've got the new university. We've got the reconstruction of the Northview Community Centre—all taking place with the previous government. It was happening then. People will believe what they want to believe, and certainly the people in my riding saw the benefits that were taking place with the previous government.

We also heard about the changes to the Electricity Act and what was happening there. I can tell you that, as Minister of Natural Resources, I worked very hard at coming forward with a policy that changed—you see, the Ministry of Natural Resources has over 660 dams that they're in full control of. The problem is that they're there for water management only. They do not take hydro development into consideration in any way, shape or form. What we were able to do was bring two ministries together, the Ministry of Energy and the Ministry of Natural Resources. MNR set a policy at that time with

the previous government that established that any reconstruction, retrofits or new dams being done all had to take hydro development into consideration. You can figure that on low-flow generation we're looking at one to five megs on each of those dams, and 660 dams will certainly add to the province's energy needs.

What's happened? My understanding from the people I dealt with is that the committee has been shut down and the Ministry of Energy is no longer interested in dealing with MNR because they don't want to deal with water-control dams. Guess what? There is a surplus of 660 potential dams that are available out there for low-flow generation that could add to the province of Ontario.

I'm into the schools. I was in the schools yesterday. Last week, I was in two schools as well. I'm in there on a regular basis. I talk to the principals and teachers on a regular basis.

The impact of capping class sizes from JK to grade 3: What's taking place is, these people are concerned because they have classes of 23 and 24. One school is going to have to put in portables to account for the new class sizes, and we're going to have JK to grade 3 in portables. Not only that, they're also going to have split classes. What that means is that a grade 2 and a grade 3 will be in the same classroom. Yes, you'll have 20 kids in each class. There will be 20 grade 2s and 20 grade 3s. I have seen it right now in Father Venini school, where they have grade 4s and grade 5s. What will take place is, the boards will look at what they are given to deal with and try to accommodate under the finances they have, and these are some of the changes that they will make.

Interjection: That's really dishonest.

Mr Ouellette: That's the way it happens, though. The principals and the boards will look at it and say, "Guess what? We've got a classroom of 20 grade 2s and a classroom of 20 grade 3s. They're going to have the same teacher, and they're going to be in the same room."

But the big concern from the principals and teachers is, what's going to happen in grade 4? What's going to happen when you have 20 grade 3 students going into grade 4? What's going to take place at that time we have yet to hear.

I was specifically asked—and it was raised on Monday and Tuesday in the Legislature—regarding special ed funding. August 28 is the critical date for that. They have complied with the guidelines. They've fulfilled that, they have spent the money and they're waiting for it now. If they don't have those funds by August 28, the local boards are going to be in a lot of critical trouble because of financial implications.

One thing people haven't figured out—and I haven't heard it around too much yet—is that the government has found a way to limit the increase in health care spending. They've made some announcements here that are effectively going to limit the increase in health care spending.

If you look at our government increase, we went from \$17.4 billion in 1995 to over \$28 billion in 2003, a substantial increase—almost a 47% increase in the health care budget. Now, with the announcements that have

taken place, you're not going to see those increases or changes in the health care budget. Effectively, they have limited the amount of spending increase in health care.

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One of the biggest concerns I have, though, is what is yet to come. For those individuals watching and those who have a copy or want to look on the Net, take a look at page 124 of the budget, the last paragraph. It specifically talks about the large increases that were announced and that we're speaking about now, but it also talks about the small increases yet to come. If you read the last paragraph on page 125, it says those small increases will be announced by the independent ministries at a later date. There is nothing to say what's going to happen. Are there going to be park fee increases for MNR for people attending provincial parks? We'll find out, I imagine, as the government moves forward. They're finding the response they are getting now, with the increases they are having now, is that they're going to have to wait till the summertime, when we don't have the opportunity to question them in the Legislature with those other increases that are taking place.

Mr Barrett: The devil's in the details.

Mr Ouellette: Absolutely. As the member says, the devil is in the details.

People judge a government effectively on how they handle what they've been dealt. In this case, they've been given a choice, and the choice the current government made was, "I'll close as I open." It's back to the future: new budget, tax and spend; what's going up?

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): I feel privileged to have the opportunity this evening to speak briefly against the government's Bill 83, the budget bill, on behalf of my constituents in Waterloo-Wellington.

It was with a great sense of anticipation that the House convened on May 18 to hear the Treasurer deliver this first Liberal budget in many years. Certainly the government was expected to respond in an appropriate way to the comments and commitments the Liberal Party had made during last September's provincial election campaign. Promises had been made; promises were expected to be kept. Numerous interest groups had supported the Liberals and they expected to be placated. It was payback time.

This is the situation the Treasurer found himself in, having survived the controversy over his service as a director and chair of the audit committee of Royal Group Technologies, a firm which is apparently under investigation by the Ontario Securities Commission and the RCMP—another shoe that has yet to drop.

As is our custom in this place, members assembled in the Legislature to hear the Treasurer's speech. Normally the galleries for a budget speech are packed. This time, many of the seats were curiously empty. The pages did an extraordinary job of quickly delivering the budget documents to the members. To say the least, I was shocked when I opened my budget speech and budget papers. Mr Speaker, you will recall the outrage that was expressed within this House that day, which was a harbinger of the reaction we would encounter in coffee

shops and on Main Streets as the people of Ontario learned of its contents.

My first public statement was to suggest that the Liberal government's credibility was severely damaged. If anything, I understated the degree to which people felt betrayed, because last fall the Liberal Party campaigned with a TV advertisement in which their leader, Mr McGuinty, promised he wouldn't raise taxes. Because this ad was broadcast hundreds of times, in effect he made the promise hundreds of times.

With the May 18 budget, he broke that promise with a brand new tax on income—not a premium, which they shamelessly and disingenuously continue to call it, but a new tax that they claimed they would put into health care.

With their unwillingness to embrace fiscal discipline, they are breaking yet another key covenant with the people. They promised to balance the budget; instead, they are adding to the provincial debt every year until at least 2008. In doing so, they are leaving our children and grandchildren an even greater financial burden because of their selfish inability to provide the appropriate fiscal leadership we need. Every household, every business, every farm, every going concern has to live within its means and balance its books, and the people of Waterloo-Wellington expect nothing less from this government.

Let's take a moment to deal with the government's defence. They claim they inherited a big deficit that they didn't know about; they assumed office seven months into the fiscal year and spending patterns were established. Nothing could be done. They hadn't found the washrooms yet.

Anyone who has served in government knows this is pure bunk. Our government, in its final year in office, presented the people of Ontario with a projected balanced budget. Admittedly, we might have chosen a more traditional venue for the budget speech, but the fact remains that every budget is a projected budget for the coming fiscal year. That spring and summer, the Ontario economy endured three significant shocks that no one could have foreseen, that no government could have avoided. One identified incidence of mad cow disease in Alberta devastated rural Ontario. A massive electricity meltdown originating in the state of Ohio effectively shut down our industry for a week with negative consequences for our GDP and obviously our revenues. A health care crisis that originated in China, severe acute respiratory syndrome or SARS, tested the limits of our health care system and killed our summer tourism season.

Did all of this have an impact on our budget in-year? Absolutely it did. But the fundamental question the House needs to consider is, does this absolve the government of responsibility for taking action when it took office in October? There were still five months left in the fiscal year, which of course ends March 31. Surely there was a responsibility on the government from the day it took office to deal with this fiscal challenge. I believe they could have balanced the budget if they had wanted to, if the political will had existed. They chose not to do so.

My colleague the member for Kitchener-Waterloo has served as our health critic since the election and has been passionate and tireless in supporting chiropractic patients, optometry patients and physiotherapy patients since this budget insulted them by taking away their OHIP coverage for these needed health services. No matter how you cut it, this is two-tier health care: one tier for the well-to-do and one where the poor can do without. There is still time for the government to extricate itself from this mistake, and they would do well to listen to the former Minister of Health.

I am conscious of the fact that this is a time-allocated debate. The government House leader has placed severe constraints upon the time allocated for this debate. Other members of our caucus wish to speak as well, and I don't want them to be shortchanged.

There is one other thought I wish to express to the House tonight. A few weeks ago in a column by Ian Urquhart in the *Toronto Star*, reference was made to the fact that in the 1995 election campaign I refused to sign the taxpayer protection pledge. This is true. In fact, I was the only Conservative candidate out of 130 who was unable to sign this pledge.

The pledge contained three elements: We were asked to commit to never raising taxes unless we were given explicit permission through a referendum; balance the budget within five years; and institute pay penalties for cabinet ministers if these promises weren't met. We were to bring this legislation in immediately.

The reason I didn't sign it was very simple. In 1994 and 1995, cynicism about politics and politicians was pervasive in our political culture, not unlike today. In response to this, from the time of my nomination meeting in 1995 through the pre-writ period and into the election campaign, I said hundreds of times to my constituents: "I will not be making any promises except one, that being to serve you to the very best of my ability if I'm re-elected."

It's true that I had misgivings about the idea of referendums on taxes because this is foreign to our British parliamentary traditions. Parliaments exist, and have existed for centuries, to set the appropriate level of tax for the public good. We accept responsibility for the decisions we make and are accountable to the people at the ballot box at election time. In any case, I had a choice to make and that was to compromise my integrity, sign the pledge and go along with the crowd or keep my word to my constituents. I chose the latter, and I don't regret it. Perhaps I paid a price, but if I did, it was worth it.

The Premier had the same choice. I believe as a candidate in the 1995 election he had refused to sign the pledge just as I did. I believe he signed it in 1999 as leader of the Liberal Party. With great fanfare and flourish at a staged political event in the 2003 election with the cameras rolling, he cynically signed it again, knowing full well he had absolutely no intention of keeping it.

I must confess, on a personal level I like Dalton McGuinty and always have since I first met him in 1990. I find it hard to believe he would compromise his

reputation to this extent to acquire power. He himself has said repeatedly, "I didn't go into politics to make the people more cynical," yet this will be his lasting legacy.

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Mrs Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): I want to congratulate the member for Waterloo-Wellington who has just spoken. I personally believe that I could not say any better than he has what I believe I feel in my heart.

The reality is that this Premier had the opportunity to make promises to people that he could keep. Regrettably, he made a promise. He signed, with flourish, the Taxpayer Protection Act and he said he would not raise taxes. In fact, many times he appeared on TV during the election campaign and said, "I will not raise your taxes." When it came to the budget, despite the fact that the Premier and the government had said they had undertaken intensive consultation, there was no indication whatsoever that this government was prepared to put aside all of the commitments it had made to the people of Ontario. Not only did they raise taxes and introduce a very punishing health tax for anyone making more than \$20,000 in this province, but, on top of that, they also decided they were going to move toward two-tier medicine; they were going to introduce more privatization into the system. This from a Premier who had promised that he was going to deliver more front-line services to the people of Ontario. He was going to focus on prevention and wellness rather than illness.

Then, with the stroke of a pen, in the budget we see that they are delisting three services: chiropractic, eye exams for those between 20 and 65, and physiotherapy. Furthermore, when you take a look at the budget, you see that there are reductions in spending for the Ontario breast screening program. That program has a goal of meeting the needs and making sure that 70% of the women in this province over the age of 50 are screened; this at a time when we know that 8,000 women in this province are going to be diagnosed this year with breast cancer and 2,000 are going to die. This Premier and this government, in their budget, have decided they're going to reduce the spending by 10% for the breast screening program and they're going to reduce the program by \$3 million.

There was a complete betrayal of people in Ontario. They believed the expensive promises that were made during the election campaign, and I can personally tell you that people are angry and discouraged. They have become even more cynical about politicians than ever before.

I would encourage all the members in the government bench to think very carefully about the budget and its broken promises. You still have a chance to vote against the budget. You can still increase the funding for those health care programs that are so important. I would encourage you to do so.

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): It's my pleasure to join the debate on the budget bill which is

being put through this evening—forced through this evening—

Interjection: Rammed through.

Mr Miller: —rammed through, with two days of public debate—

Interjection: Eight hours.

Mr Miller: —eight hours of public debate here in Toronto, with very little notice, which is a bit of a joke.

I have a very brief time here this evening and I would like to focus on my own riding, Parry Sound-Muskoka, because this budget bill was a slam in the face for the people of Parry Sound-Muskoka.

On page 96 of the budget papers, there's one little line at the bottom of the page: "As a result, we propose to return the definition of northern Ontario, for the purposes of government policy and program delivery, to what it was before September 2000." That's it. No mention in the budget speech of the word "Muskoka." This has great significance to the people of Muskoka. It removes Muskoka from the north, and this is going to have some negative effects for the people of Muskoka.

They did this without any consultation at all. For a government that says that they consult, that they have democratic renewal, there was no consultation whatsoever with the six municipalities in Muskoka—none whatsoever. They were absolutely caught by surprise. The hospitals in Muskoka were absolutely caught by surprise. Now, all of a sudden, they are scrambling around, trying to figure out how they're going to make ends meet this year.

I've received some letters which really enunciate very clearly how the citizens of Muskoka are feeling. Here's one to me. I'd like to read a part of it.

"Mr Miller,

"I would like to express my concern over the loss of northern Ontario status for Muskoka. We are a community with one of the lowest per-family incomes in the province; our health care has consistently been rated at the bottom of the scale of excellence by Maclean's magazine. Many must travel to Sudbury for medical care—we need our travel expenses subsidized; our hospitals need extra funding in order to recruit doctors, staff, rehab beds etc."

The letter goes on from there, and it's a very well-written letter from a constituent of mine.

In just a week and a half or so, I've received 6,000 petitions demanding that Muskoka be put back in northern Ontario. From what I understand, I've received hundreds more just today—every day, 300 or 400 more petitions.

Here's another letter that enunciates some other concerns.

"Dear Premier McGuinty,

"I finally get it. After five years of trying to make it in the district of Muskoka that I grew up in, and had to move away from to have a job other than a waitress, I give up.

"No matter what I tell you, you think people like me and my neighbours who live in Muskoka are rich prop-

erty owners who don't need any assistance and bear no resemblance to other people in northern Ontario. Why else would you drop our northern designation without warning, without consultation?"

Summing up this letter—and it's a long letter:

"Premier McGuinty, please reconsider this boundary change. Your callous treatment of us in your budget just set us back another decade. The way it was presented to communities to the north of us by your cabinet members was disgraceful. I am astonished that you can be so out of touch with your constituents. Any time you want a guided tour to see the real Muskoka, call me. I will be pleased to enlighten you. You'll have to pay for the gas."

I think that says it very clearly. This measure in the budget is a stab in the back for the people of Muskoka.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It's very difficult to stand here in the very few minutes I have to represent the people of Durham and their frustration. I just want to enter into evidence here a couple of documents. It's the Public Accounts of Ontario and these are for the 2002-03 fiscal year. This document is signed by the Honourable Greg Sorbara and it's dated November 2003 in Toronto. This is also signed by all of the financial officials, including the auditor of Ontario. To validate this as a legal document, it says that the consolidated financial statements express "the opinion of the Assistant Provincial Auditor as to whether the consolidated financial statements fairly report the activities of the government in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles."

Actually it's quite interesting because Jim McCarter, who is the Assistant Provincial Auditor, states on page 30 of this document that the annual surplus at the end of the 2003 audited statements, signed by Greg Sorbara, is \$117 million. Enter that into evidence: The accumulated debt at that time had moved from—in 2002 the debt was \$132 million; at the end of the 2003 actual audited statement, it was down to \$118 million. I can go on to some extent, because the report of the Provincial Auditor, Erik Peters, also enunciates the same document.

As explained earlier from the member of Waterloo-Wellington in a very eloquent speech, very eloquently delivered, which I give him credit for, it simply tells the truth that he had the same choice as Dalton McGuinty. I'm holding an official copy of the Taxpayer Protection Act, which Dalton McGuinty signed on September 11, 2003, just prior to the election; what I call a deliberate obfuscation, signed by Dalton McGuinty and witnessed in public, in front of the cameras, where he promised—and I will read it: "I, Dalton McGuinty, leader of the Liberal Party of Ontario, promise, if my party is elected as the next government, that I will"—

Interjection: Did he keep his promise?

Mr O'Toole: —listen; it's very important; you told the people an untruth—"not raise taxes or implement any new taxes without the explicit consent of Ontario voters." You promised to abide by the Taxpayer Protection Act.

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How can you, in all conscience—and for the few seconds I have left, I want to cite a few members on the

other side who I think have some conscience, but they have no gall. They can't use their guts. Jim Brownell stated on March 28 that he was unhappy with the budget. Phil McNeely, the person who spoke tonight, called the budget "brutal" on May 29. On May 25, Kim Craitor demanded that McGuinty restore health care and the services he slashed. Dave Levac, who is the whip of the party, told chiropractors on May 29, 2004, that he felt their pain. Marie Bountrogianni said, "We will be fighting to lower the premiums." How much more evidence do you need? You have no confidence to do the dignified and the honourable thing. Ask Mr Sorbara, who's here tonight, to do the right thing.

In the last two minutes I have, I'm going to leave with what I call the litany of Liberal broken promises. I'm going to give you two versions. Listen up. The two versions are federal and then provincial.

Federal: Paul Martin cut health care in 1993. He promised, along with Sheila Copps and Jean Chrétien, to eliminate the GST. Period. He promised to cancel free trade. What did he do? Nothing. The flag scandal, the helicopters, airport—the list goes on of their obfuscation and broken promises. The Liberals have one legacy, and that is that they don't tell the truth.

The provincial litany is as follows: They cancelled physiotherapy, optometry, chiropractic; a health tax; retroactivity; electricity prices; auto insurance—all broken promises. The Liberals simply don't get it. They've time-allocated this debate. They've broken their promises. They've prohibited debate. We have no other choice in this House but to vote against this bill and hold you accountable for the next four years.

Mr Dunlop: I'm pleased to complete our debate on third reading tonight. As you know, Mr Speaker, it has been shortened. The government didn't have the courage to go to committee hearings over the course of the summer months, something they talked about—open government and all the hoopla we've heard from this government.

I don't think anybody actually believes anything a Liberal says any more. Yesterday, the Premier foolishly went to Washington, embarrassed himself down there once again, and actually said, "Believe me." That's what he actually told the people down in Washington. Who believes Dalton McGuinty? High school students in Saskatoon don't believe Dalton McGuinty. No one believes you. It's your legacy: A Liberal is a Liberal is a Liberal, plain and simple.

It starts back—and my colleague from Durham mentioned it very clearly a few minutes ago, when he talked about the red book promise to eliminate the GST. That really started it all. That was the architect of the destruction of health care in Canada. Paul Martin—we know where he is today. He finally—

Interjections.

Mr Dunlop: What it's all about here tonight is—we've heard over and over again from our caucus, from people all across the province of Ontario. We all remember back to the election. We all remember the promises made by all the candidates.

I can see the shame in your faces tonight. You're ashamed you're Liberals. I can look across the room and people are discouraged. They wish they were Tories. They wish they had run under the Tory banner. They want to be on our side, because if you're on our side, you're going to form the next government in 2007 on October 4. That's a fact of life. People don't believe you any more. People do not believe Liberals, no matter where they are today in Canada. And I brought my article along about the boat anchor, Dalton McGuinty, sinking the good ship Liberal run by Captain Paul Martin, soon to be the ex-Prime Minister of our country.

We listen over and over again. They keep going back to this excuse of the deficit. It's so worn out now, it's so tired, that it's actually disgusting. All you had to do today was go out in the parking lot, out in the front of the building here, in the front of Queen's Park, and talk to—I'm assuming there were about 1,000 people out there today, all chiropractors. They said everything today. They said everything. The media were there. We talked to chiropractors from all across the country, talked to their patients and clients. It's actually disgraceful, the comments we heard and the hate toward this government, in just eight short months.

On October 2, 2003, they won a majority government based on a bunch of promises they made that they knew full well they could not keep. Here we are tonight, eight and a half, almost nine months later, completing their first budget. They've already lost one by-election. They were humiliated in that by-election. Now they've brought down their federal counterparts. We know full well that Stephen Harper will likely form the next government. Paul Martin is on his way out. That's where he should be, because he is the man who tried to destroy health care in Canada.

Ladies and gentlemen, I can see the shame in their faces tonight. They're disappointed. They're sorry they brought time allocation to this very, very disastrous budget, the worst budget in the history of the province of Ontario, bar none. Six lousy hours of committee hearings; time allocation tonight.

You guys all have an opportunity. Vote against this tonight. Don't listen to the Premier's office. Don't listen to the Minister of Finance. Forget it. You still have a chance to redeem yourselves. Vote against this budget because I'm sure all of your constituents, by tomorrow morning, will know full well how you voted tonight. You voted for the most disastrous budget in the history of Ontario. If you vote for anything, you should be voting for a referendum to go back to the public. We've said it over and over again tonight: The Premier signed the Taxpayer Protection Act, which called for a referendum. They still have a chance to redeem themselves tonight, to vote against this. Let's go out and call for a referendum under the Taxpayer Protection Act.

Many of you had all kinds of opportunities, and you took time to take part in the photo op, to sign on the dotted line on September 11 with the Canadian Taxpayers Federation. Redeem yourselves tonight. Get rid of

that shame that's on your faces. Get rid of it. You have an opportunity to redeem yourselves and vote against this budget tonight. Go back to your constituents, like Mr Craitor, one man who does have some courage over there. Redeem yourself. He already got good publicity because he stood up a little bit against the Premier's office. He's done that. Even Mr McNeely has done the same thing. These are people who have some courage. They've at least stood up and opposed the Premier's office on this absolutely disastrous budget.

All you had to do today, any one of the 71 of you could have come out today to the front of building at Queen's Park and talked to the chiropractors. Nobody from the Liberal caucus showed up. A couple of Dalton McGuinty spies from the Premier's office were there; that's all.

This is a disaster. I know you're going to pass this by 9:20, but I'm going to tell you, you're going to wear this, and many of you people here tonight as MPPs will not be here after October 4, 2007, if in fact you can even keep that promise.

The bottom line here is our caucus is against this particular piece of legislation. It's a disaster for the history of the province of Ontario, and I urge everyone to vote against this budget.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): We've got but 50 minutes. Here we are, it's around 8:30 at night, and we've got but 50 minutes for the New Democrats.

Now you've got to understand. The Liberals, you see, have time-allocated this bill. They've guaranteed there will not be thorough third reading debate. I regret that. I deplore that. I find that most unfortunate, especially with a budget that's so contentious and of so much concern to so many people in this province.

2030

I'm going to share this time with Michael Prue, who is our finance critic. He's going to wrap up. When Michael Prue's finished, we will be forced to put this bill to a vote.

I want to make it quite clear that New Democrats will not be supporting Bill 83. New Democrats do not support this government's budget. New Democrats do not support the attack on public health care. New Democrats do not support the Liberal privatization of chiropractic, optometry and physiotherapy. New Democrats do not support the imposition of an aggressive, unfair and regressive tax on low- and middle-income people, who have been paying more than their fair share of taxes for a long, long time now.

Speaker, I'm anticipating you being concerned about me staying on topic. That's why I want to draw your attention to the fact that Bill 83, in particular section 17, is an amendment to the Taxpayer Protection Act. Basically, this government is going to change the law to avoid breaking it. I'm not sure—and I know there are folks in this chamber with more recollection than I have—but it seems to me that there is some precedent. It was Mitch Hepburn, wasn't it—you'd be familiar with this, Speaker—who created the concept of gross negligence to

cover his own butt in somewhat similar circumstances? Others will reflect on that.

But in the context of this bill amending the Taxpayer Protection Act, I want to talk about protecting some taxpayers. I want to talk about one taxpayer in particular, Kenneth G. Wilkinson from Thorold. It was just today that I happened to open his letter to me. I thought, after I read it and phoned him, "By gosh, here's a taxpayer who needs protection." Because, you see, he's getting ripped off by the Ministry of Finance. He is. Back in March, Mr Wilkinson went to the Bay, bought himself a Maytag washing machine and, of course, believed the government when they said they were going to reimburse him for the sales tax on that Maytag energy-efficient washing machine.

So Mr Wilkinson, back after purchasing this Maytag washing machine at the Bay, submits his invoice. Indeed, he submits the sales bill in addition to the invoice, the cash register receipt. I've got a photocopy here of the cash register receipt. The cash register receipt indicates the day the purchase was made. It identifies the model number. It's called an Atlantis. It indicates the serial number, the date of purchase, the amount of provincial sales tax paid. He also included the sales invoice, the five-part sales bill, which repeats all of that information, including Mr Wilkinson's name, his address and his telephone number. It talks about a Maytag Atlantis, model number MAV7501. It identifies the amount of sales tax.

He submits all this stuff, believing that this government was going to keep its promise to rebate the provincial sales tax. What happens? Another broken promise by the Dalton McGuinty Liberals here at Queen's Park. He fills out the application for rebate of retail sales tax and again talks about this being a washer, a Maytag, model number, amount of rebate claimed, purchase date back in March, delivered on April 7. What does he get June 1 from the Ministry of Finance? He gets a letter that says, very impersonally:

"Dear Claimant:

"In order to process your refund application, we require the following:

"—the invoice submitted does not show the information required to process your claim" with respect to "model number, date of purchase, invoice number etc."

Mr Wilkinson was irate, to say the least. Mr Wilkinson felt that this government once again wasn't prepared to keep one of its promises, in particular the promise to him to rebate his sales tax. So he wrote back to the Ministry of Finance on June 10, with a copy to me. He acknowledged receipt of the letter of June 1 and stated, "I would advise all the information was there as requested. However, the key word is public service and it appears your staff is unable to review the documents and satisfy themselves that indeed the information is there.

"I attended the store where I purchased the washer and they quickly identified the information for me"—on the forms that he had submitted—"and I have highlighted them for you....

"While I assume your department receives a large number of requests, a few moments spent ... could quickly calculate and determine that all the information is there."

He then summarizes the information that's contained on the invoice, the cash register invoice that's printed out by the Bay, and on the five-part sales bill, and then notes that, "in all probability I will have to wait another two months for this rebate if all things are in order."

Well, Mr Ken Wilkinson from Thorold, Ontario, who properly and appropriately submitted all his invoices, expecting a rebate of the sales tax paid by him on this new washing machine, doesn't think the promises by this government are being kept, and quite frankly, neither does a correspondent called John Gabel, who writes me from Yellowknife, Northwest Territories.

Again, I got this letter just a couple of days ago, and it's a copy of the letter he sent to the Minister of Finance. Mr Gabel writes that he lived in Ontario for over 11 years, up to 2003, and during that entire period, he dealt with Liberty Mutual Insurance, now TD Insurance. He still has a vehicle in Ontario—notwithstanding that he lives in Northwest Territories—a 2000 Toyota Corolla.

"Recently," he writes, "I called Liberty Mutual to reactivate the insurance on this vehicle (it has been in storage and was only covered by comprehensive insurance during the winter), with my daughter as the primary driver. She is 25 years of age, took driver training several years ago, has her full G licence and has never received a traffic ticket. She did have one ... accident in December 2000 when she slid off the 401 during a bad snowstorm and struck the back of a tractor-trailer.... The OPP was present and she was not charged; to my knowledge no other drivers were charged." You see, that's not an at-fault accident, is it? That's called a no-fault accident. You can't blame her. No charges were laid. They surely would have been, had she been at fault.

"Liberty Mutual quoted an annual premium of \$6,279.35." Some \$6,300 a year. "They said that without the accident, it would have been \$2,689" a year. "Twice I phoned Liberty Mutual to ask if this rate was correct or there was some mistake, and was assured that it was correct, and that in spite of the circumstances and relatively low cost of the previous claim, this higher rate would stay in effect until my daughter had been accident-free for six years. I also asked if they would consider forgiving the accident in light of the fact that we had been good customers for so many years ... and my daughter's good record. I was told they would not consider this."

He writes: "This is scandalous. I would like your response as to the type of regulation that is in place to prevent this price gouging by Liberty/TD. I also hope this type of situation calls into question the appropriateness of Liberty/TD being licensed to sell insurance in Ontario."

"I am no longer a resident of Ontario, but my daughter is, and she has learned a great deal about the insurance industry through this process. I can be reached by mail or at" his telephone number."

Obviously, Liberty/TD Insurance is a rip-off. There isn't a person out there who should be insuring a vehicle with TD Insurance. Liberty Mutual Insurance, based in Boston, was purchased by TD Bank Financial. And as if the banks haven't ripped you off enough, now TD Bank is ripping off its customers by gouging them with insurance premiums that are atrocious, that are unjustifiable, that are unconscionable. This government promised that it would not only control but reduce insurance premiums by 20%—another promise broken.

Talking about protecting taxpayers, by gosh, today I happened to run across a copy of the minutes of the first meeting of the Ontario-Québec Parliamentary Association. Now, I knew there was such a group, but I picked up the minutes and had occasion to read them. I saw that they had their first meeting, and gosh, it sounded like a good time was had by all. It was just a jolly old time. I mean, they elected people to become vice-presidents, and then one member congratulated the people who had just been elected. Then another member said, by golly, she was really looking forward to the things that they'd be discussing as members of this club.

Then a third member, a Liberal member, cut to the chase. He wasn't going to waste time with all this dilly-dallying about what nice folks they were or what nice things they could do together; he wanted to cut to the chase. He wanted to know how the delegation was chosen to travel to Quebec City for the convention, for the junket that's going to be held later. You see, he didn't want to mess around with the niceties. He wanted to get right to the point. "How do we get on the junket?"

2040

Well, the Speaker, being an obliging person and obviously a cornucopia of information, advised that there would be seven members of the club, the Ontario-Québec Parliamentary Association, plus the Speaker, who would be delegates on this junket to Quebec City. The government of Quebec has a parallel group, so these people nurture each other, and it's like a club for junket junkies. Do you understand what I'm saying? You can't go on the junket unless you join the club. There are no membership requirements, but the taxpayer pays for the trip—seven members plus the Speaker, and the taxpayer pays for the trip. But that's just the beginning.

I happened to have occasion to click on my Internet machine, my computer, and by gosh, what member of this Legislative Assembly was in Marrakesh? Marrakesh: That's in northern Africa. It's an exotic destination. I understand federal MPs doing junkets of that ilk, because of course they do junkets all over the world, but a provincial MPP was in Marrakesh on a taxpayer-funded junket. This jumped out at me on my computer machine that MPP Jean-Marc Lalonde was in Marrakesh. I thought that was fascinating, that an Ontario legislator was going to Marrakesh, and I wondered, what other destinations have there been where taxpayers have accommodated members of the assembly with such largesse?

Well, from May 14 to 19, an MPP was in Bucharest, Romania. Bucharest? An Ontario legislator in Bucharest?

I'm not sure. It seems that there were Ontario legislators in Paris, France. Not cabinet ministers, not the Minister of Tourism—they're on legitimate business—but backbenchers, junket junkies, off on these little international visitations. We're talking about Marrakesh, we're talking about Paris, we're talking about Bucharest, we're talking about Dakar, we're talking about Niger, we're talking about Neuchâtel, Switzerland, on the taxpayers' tab.

Maybe the Minister of Health should be financing the commencement of a 12-step program for junket junkies. The sort of people who go off on these junkets could come to the 12-step program meeting and they would stand up and say, "Hi. My name is Jean-Marc and I am a junket junkie, and I want to clear the air right off." That's how the 12-step programs have worked. He'd stand up and say, "Hi. My name is Jean-Marc and I am a junket junkie. I go to places like Marrakesh on the taxpayers' tab. I go to any number of places throughout not just Ontario—"

Mr Colle: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The standing orders indicate very clearly that we're supposed to speak to the bill before us. I don't know what Marrakesh has to do with Bill 83 and this geographic merry-go-round he's put us on. We're dealing with Bill 83.

The Acting Speaker: The point is noted. I'm sure the member is listening.

Mr Kormos: Thank you kindly, Speaker. So says the member from Marrakesh.

Yesterday, I happened to reach for Bourinot's parliamentary procedure, 4th edition, 1916. It revealed itself. It just fell open to page 341, where it said, "The precise relevancy of an argument is not always perceptible, but the Speaker must be satisfied that it is relevant, otherwise he reminds the member that he must speak to the question." So to save you from getting up on your feet, I will presume to have been reminded. But I gotta warn you, as I had occasion to tell the Speaker yesterday, the relevance isn't always perceptible, and that's acknowledged. As it was Bourinot—

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I was just in my office—

The Acting Speaker: Member, I haven't recognized you yet, OK?

The Chair recognizes the member for Glengarry-Prescott-Russell.

Mr Lalonde: Mr Speaker, I thought when a member was absent from the House that we were not supposed to bring up his name.

But, first of all, I want to clarify what he just said. Most of my—

The Acting Speaker: That's not a point of order. The member for Niagara Centre, continue.

Mr Kormos: Thank you kindly, Speaker. So says the member from Marrakesh. Will he want to make the same explanation as to any other number—you see, the problem, once you get into this, is that you go on down the list and you start identifying other destinations that people have been to on the taxpayers' tab. Far be it from

me—but I suppose in the context of that I should make reference to the membership of the club that met to discuss their junkets to Quebec City. These are members of the Ontario-Québec Parliamentary Association. They are Ted Arnott, Christopher Bentley, Laurel Broten, Michael Bryant, David Caplan, Kim Craiton, Caroline Di Cocco, Ernie Hardeman, Frank Klees, Rosario Marchese, John Milloy, Bill Murdoch, Tim Peterson, Mario Sergio, Norm Sterling, Jim Wilson, John Baird, Gilles Bisson, Mike Brown, Donna Cansfield, Mary Anne Chambers, Bruce Crozier, Kevin Daniel Flynn, Cam Jackson, Dave Levac, Deb Matthews, Jennifer Mossop, John O'Toole, Mario Racco—a person who I know has an intense interest in Quebec-Ontario parliamentary tradition and convention—Monique Smith and Joseph Tascona.

So that's the membership of the Ontario-Québec Parliamentary Association, some of whose members attended that meeting on April 21 to discuss the junket to Quebec City, paid for with taxpayers' dollars—seven members and one Speaker.

Niger, Dakar, and let's not overlook the 30th conference of the International Association of Francophone Parliamentarians in Prince Edward Island this year. Prince Edward Island on the taxpayers' tab in the summertime is going to be a particularly attractive destination. It's going to be in the middle of lobster season.

As I say, my concern is that the budget of the Minister of Health should perhaps be addressing the issue of this addiction to junkets and the junket junkies who find themselves lured by this unsavoury underworld of travel and wining and dining at taxpayers' expense. It's like that movie, *The Man with the Golden Arm*. So they find themselves lured by this unsavoury underground of taxpayer-funded travel, dining and wining.

They then find themselves hooked. They start out on the small stuff. Oh, you might start out on an Ontario-Québec Parliamentary Association junket to Quebec City, but before you know it, you're into the heavy stuff. Before you know it, you're into Niger, you're into Marrakesh, you're into Dakar, you're into Neuchâtel, Switzerland. You're spending more and more.

The one remarkable thing about French-language destinations, of course, is that the hub for travel there is inevitably Paris. That is the real lure because the plane tickets are of a calibre—not that they're first-class—that can be extended for, let's say, a week or 10 days, so that you can take the plane ticket, paid for by the taxpayer, and have yourself a vacation in Paris en route or on return from the destination in a former French colony.

Interjection.

Mr Kormos: Mr Stockwell, as Speaker, perfected the style, and as a minister, he took it to almost criminal proportions. Indeed, he still hasn't paid the \$7,000 he promised to pay back.

2050

Interjection: He was absolved of that.

Mr Kormos: No, he wasn't absolved. Mind you, you should understand this is still within small claims court jurisdiction.

So I say, in defence of taxpayers, those who have junket addictions should be prepared to stand up and declare themselves to suffer these illnesses. They should be prepared to stand up and tell not only the people in their own communities, but the Ontario press gallery that they've been on this junket. They should be able to proclaim—in fact, they should file with the Clerk or the Speaker's office or the Integrity Commissioner—

M. Lalonde: Un point d'ordre, monsieur le Président: Puisqu'on parle des francophones, on devrait s'adresser en français ici. C'est que les personnes qui comprennent le français devraient avoir le temps de nous parler en français.

Mr Kormos: Well, I'm sorry if Mr Lalonde is offended by having been identified as suffering from this affliction. I say it not by way of attack, but by way of me expressing concern about his welfare, much as I'd express concern about a person with a bad pharmaceutical drug addiction, a bad booze habit or a bad heroin habit. As I say, 12-step programs can be very effective. I say that junket junkies, if they're going to have clubs and organize themselves into events, would be wise to find themselves a good addictions counsellor. Go over to the Addiction Research Foundation; there are people to help you run these kinds of groups. But the first thing you've got to do is fundamental, whether it's heroin addiction or cocaine addiction or alcoholism or a pharmaceutical drug addiction—

Ms Judy Marsales (Hamilton West): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The honourable member is impugning the reputation of our member by suggesting that he has some addiction.

The Acting Speaker: That's not a point of order and it's not the case.

Go ahead.

Mr Kormos: Yes, Ms Marsales, that's the point. That's the point, and the first step to recovery is to admit it. You see, every addict that I've ever known or know is in denial. They rationalize, they justify, they explain away their habit. Junket junkies are in the same state of denial. Just like the alcoholic who hides the booze in the toilet tank—you know, the mickey of gin—junket junkies hide their junkets. They don't want the public to know about them. They don't want their voters to know about them. They don't want this assembly to know about them.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Niagara Centre, I think I've given you some latitude to see where you're going. Do you want to return to the bill, please?

Mr Kormos: Thank you kindly, Speaker, for your direction.

Section 17, of course, is an effort by this government to amend the Taxpayer Protection Act. I say taxpayers in this province need protection. I say taxpayers in this province deserve protection. I say taxpayers in this province seek protection. They seek protection from politicians with addictions to junkets that abuse the public purse by heading off not just throughout the province, but

across Canada, across North America, and indeed internationally, on junkets that they—

Ms Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I just want to point out that he keeps carrying on about junkets being made by some people on a committee. There have been no junkets. If I'm going to be accused of taking a junket, I want to at least get the junket. He's making improper insinuations and impugning—

The Acting Speaker: That's not a point of order. Take your seat.

The member for Niagara Centre, can you just speak to the bill, please, and we can get off that.

Mr Kormos: Of course I will. I say to the member from Stoney Creek, it's a simple matter of, if the shoe fits, wear it. But people with addictions have to overcome their denial, just like this government has to overcome its denial of imposing harsh new taxes on low- and middle-income people. This government perhaps shares some of the same addiction problems as do members of this assembly and, quite frankly, other politicians, be it federally or in other provincial Legislatures, those members who are junket junkies, those members who create clubs and want to join them and belong to them for the sole purpose, like the Quebec-Ontario parliamentary association, of going on those junkets.

I have no qualms about people lawfully consuming that level of taxpayers' money, but come clean. Eliminate and stop the denial. The road to recovery starts with admitting that you have the addiction. Junket junkies of this Legislature and Legislatures beyond, there is a cure. There's a way out. There's freedom for you at the end of the road. It's a simple matter of coming to grips—

Ms Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I know you've tried to rein this speaker in, but according to standing order number 23, "In debate, a member shall be called to order by the Speaker if he or she: ... directs his or her speech to matters other than ... the question under discussion," and I believe that's what this speaker is doing.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Niagara Centre, are you going to speak to the bill?

Mr Kormos: I do want the Speaker to note—and it was interesting because just while the member was rising on her point of order, I happened to reach for Erskine May. It fell open in my hand to page 452, and the reference is this:

"The Deputy Speaker deprecated a growing practice of interruptions of debate by members who, 'when the honourable member who is speaking refuses to give way, think that the only way that they can get their word in is by raising a point of order.' He stated that in his opinion such interruptions constituted fraudulent points of order, and should be stopped."

New Democrats are not going to be supporting Bill 83. I say to you that we'll be proud to stand with the people of this province while these McGuinty Liberals continue to deceive and put them under attack.

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): Before I start, I must say that I too have a predilection to be a

junkie. It's probably called the "wild tie junkie" and I think I've outdone myself today on that.

This budget was much anticipated. This budget was waited for by the people of Ontario for many years. They wanted to see what was going to happen in the post-Harris, post-Eves era of a new Liberal government. It was hugely anticipated for all that time.

There were many people in the electorate, many Ontarians who believed the unbelievable at the time of the last election. They believed that a political party could make 231 promises on this hand and one promise on this hand that they wouldn't raise taxes. I think that was an unbelievable belief and it was an unsustainable belief, as we found when the minister stood up to deliver his budget some four weeks ago. It was also, I would suggest, a budget where they were expecting fairness to working families and found out that, in reality, there is no such thing.

This budget is, of course, very controversial. It is not, as the minister has said in his statement—although I think it was adequately set forth when he put his position before this House—that it was because the new government found themselves in a circumstance that was not of their knowing. There have been many speeches in this House over the last few months since October about whether the present government knew about the transgressions of the former government in running up deficits. But I will tell you, I'm going to leave all of those because I think rational people know that politicians who are in this House have at least an inkling of whether or not budgets are in some kind of turmoil, and whether or not politicians are delivering on budgets, throughout the entire cycle of a budget year. Certainly, statements were made by all parties, statements were made by many outside factors during the lead-up to the election that in fact there was a \$5-billion budget deficit. I don't think anyone should deny today that that was not common knowledge inside this Legislature.

I think this budget has become very controversial because of two things: The first was that it implemented an unfair and regressive tax called a health premium; and the second reason for the controversy of this budget is that it delisted important services that people have come to rely upon.

2100

I want to deal first of all with the unfairness of the tax. I'm going to use the Canadian Taxpayer Federation for this. This is an unlikely group for a New Democrat to talk about, but they set it out very well in their submission before the committee. They set out that a person or a family making \$25,000 a year will pay under this budget some \$300, or 1.2% of the their net income, to pay the tax. They also pointed out, quite correctly, that a family making \$48,000 a year will pay \$450 and will, in fact, pay 0.94% of their family income in this new regressive tax. Then they went to a family of \$72,000 per year and showed that it would decline further, so they would only pay 0.083% of the tax to an amount of \$600. Last but not least, they talked about an individual—not a

family, an individual—earning \$500,000, who would pay \$900, of course, because that's the cap and the maximum. They in fact would only be paying 0.017% of their income in this tax for health.

We on this side of the House, and certainly we in the New Democratic Party, believe that people who can afford to pay the taxes should be the people who pay the taxes and that people at modest and modest-to-low incomes should not have to shoulder a greater burden than those people who are at higher incomes. We believe that is a wrong proposition. In fact, that is the fundamental reason I will tell members on the other side that we do not support your budget.

There are things in this budget that New Democrats welcome which may surprise you. I think it's a great idea that children are going to be immunized. I think it's a great idea that money is going to be spent on our schools, our hospitals and other places that people have been crying out for for years. But we oppose this budget because it is unfair, because you are not getting the money to do necessary, good things in this province from people who should be paying it. You are taking in \$1.6 billion this year and \$2.4 billion in what can only be described as one of the most regressive taxes to hit this province in many years.

I might go back in history just a few weeks before the budget to see the speculation and the trial balloons that were being floated by the Liberal Party at that time, by the Minister of Finance and the Premier, of ways to get the money, the \$1.6 billion. I'm going to have to tell you that one of them was what was called the soup-and-salad tax, trying to get 8% of the money from the provincial sales tax on those who have soup and salad for lunch, and that has been exempt for many years. There was a huge hue and cry across this province and they backed off. But in retrospect, I think the alternate solution that has found its way into the budget is far more regressive even than that tax, which was floated and then abandoned.

People simply cannot afford this tax at a modest and low income. It is a lot of money to poor and modest people earning \$21,000 in a family to even pay \$60 that they do not have. It is a lot of money for a middle-class family at \$72,000 to struggle to fine the \$600 they're going to have to come up with to pay a tax they never should have paid in the first place. It is disproportionate and it is wrong. If that were not bad enough—

Mr David Zimmer (Willowdale): I rise on a point of order, Mr Speaker. I've raised it with my friend. I'm compelled to introduce my mother-in-law, who's visiting from Victoria, BC. I'm compelled to introduce her tonight. So stand.

The Acting Speaker: It's not a point of order, but it's well taken. Member from Beaches-East York.

Mr Prue: No, it's not a point of order, but I would do the same for my mother-in-law, Mr Speaker.

It's bad enough that this was done, but then I think it was exacerbated this past week or couple of weeks, when the Premier spent a lot of money—and admittedly from his own party coffers; they seem to be flush—to go on

the radio stations across this province and say that every single penny of this regressive health tax is going to be spent on health care.

I will be the first to admit that Ontario needs new sewers. I would be the first to admit that Ontario needs potholes in roads fixed. I would be the first to admit that Ontario needs a lot of money—

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): Are you speaking against the Dalton McGuinty sewer pipe tax?

Mr Prue: Yes. I would be the first to admit that money needs to be spent in many, many areas of this province after years of neglect, but this is a stretch. This is a stretch of monumental proportion, to say that every single penny of this is going into health care. I underline "care." We all know that health has many fronts, and we all know that getting rid of sewage in a safe way will ensure that health is maintained, but it hardly constitutes health care. It hardly constitutes that.

In fact, in the budgets going back through successive governments—Conservative, New Democratic and Liberal governments—never once before has sewer maintenance been included in the health care budget. Even though that budget is now closing in on 50% of the gross spending of this province, never before until today is it one of the determinants of a health care budget. I think that, quite frankly, was wrong of the Premier, to make those statements on the radio. They certainly are not backed up by this budget.

It was also very wrong that many of the things alluded to in the budget that is being spent because of the increased dollars coming in, everything from immunization to added nurses, is in reality not part of this budget. In reality, it is the \$680 million that has flowed in from the federal government. These are federal earmarked funds. They are to be used precisely for what they're being used for, and have nothing to do with this budget, in spite of the protestations of the minister.

The second aspect that has been troubling people is the delisting. Of course, other speakers have talked about that. Chiropractic services, which six million people in Ontario used last year, are going to be delisted. Optometry services, that literally about a quarter of the population use each and every two years when they get their eyes tested, are going to be delisted. Physiotherapy services, 80% of which are used by senior citizens, are going to be delisted.

There is no firm rationale of how and why we would not be spending the money in this way. This bill that we're arguing here tonight is the result of this government's first closure motion. Part of that closure motion is that we would have two days of hearings, in which we would invite the public and interested parties to come forward and to make depositions. Then after that, there was a forced closure vote and a third reading closure that we're having here tonight.

I want to tell you, I listened intently. There were six written submissions and 17 oral presentations that came in in a very short period of time. So many groups were left out. The saddest one, to my mind, was the Canadian

Association of Retired Persons, generally known as CARP, who were left out. They had a great deal to say about how this budget is going to adversely affect older Ontarians. They were not heard.

From amongst those that were heard, there were several themes. There were people who came to talk about little tiny aspects of the budget, such as the Canadian Generic Pharmaceutical Association in a written submission about generic drugs. There were people who came to talk about little tiny aspects, like the Ontario Flue-Cured Tobacco Growers' Marketing Board, who wanted a subsidy to stop growing tobacco in Ontario. There was some general support by some of the groups around the areas of the gas tax revenues for cities, primary care, immunization and the tobacco taxes going up. Certainly I can support those sentiments that some of the groups said.

However, most of the people who came before the committee had two things in mind that they wanted to say. The groups wanted to say that they thought the Ontario health premium was wrong, and they wanted to say that those services that are being delisted were wrong as well, perhaps even bordering on the immoral.

2110

I'd like to quote—and I'm assisted here by the very able research officer from Research and Information Services, Larry Johnston, who provided a synopsis for members of the committee—just what some of these people had to say.

On the Ontario health premium, the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario said, "Importantly, the budget and budget speech suggest the government will change rigid legislation," and went on to talk about that. Then they went on to say that the proposed Ontario health premium is really a tax; it is a very regressive tax, disproportionately bearing on low- and middle-income people—the RNAO, CUPE and the OFL. The RNAO also said, "If the health premium is to proceed, we urge the government to restructure it to ensure that it is as progressive as the current income tax system, with no cap."

An individual who often comes to sit in this chamber in the place where Mr Zimmer's mother-in-law is sitting now—you may not recognize the name, but she does often come here—Donna Lynn McCallum, in a written statement, used a lot of common sense, just sort of what the people on the street had to say, when she said, "Charge this levy according to income tax rules, pay a percentage of your earnings, as governed by the income tax law, whereby a person pays a certain per cent of their total earnings, and a person who earns more pays a higher percentage of their earnings, including both big banks and large companies utilizing the tax bracket system." Eminent sense.

The Association of Municipalities of Ontario had a very real concern as well. It is, to read from here, "As employers, municipalities are also concerned that the government be clear that its proposed Ontario health premium is a new tax, and not a restoration of health

insurance premiums eliminated in 1990." That is a huge concern, because they continue to call it a premium on the other side of the House. If it is a premium, it is going to cost huge millions of dollars to municipalities, private companies and people under unionized contracts. I think the minister had better clarify this pretty fast, because the members in the committee did not want to clarify it too accurately at all, jumping from one side to the other, afraid to call it a tax and admitting it's probably not a premium as well.

We also had people talk about delisted services. Just to go through some of those again, the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario said, "We are troubled by the delisting of essential services." We have the Ontario Health Coalition: "Delisting and attacks on universality of medicare are a false economy. Delisting of optometry, chiropractic and physiotherapy services will increase the out-of-pocket burden and reduce access to services that promote health and prevent illness." We also heard again from Ms Donna Lynn McCallum: "I do not feel that any services should be delisted or removed from the health services we have now. Yes, charge us more, but give us more, don't take away from one service to include another." In reality, what is happening is that you are charging more and getting less. Certainly all of the people, particularly senior citizens, are seeing they're getting less in terms of physiotherapy and chiropractic services. We also see from CUPE Ontario, "Chiropractic, physiotherapy and optometry service cuts will create huge pressures at the bargaining table; difficult days in collective bargaining are ahead."

It goes on and on like this. I've only got six minutes left, so I'd just like to talk about the fact that in this truncated committee with hearings that only lasted for a few hours, we heard some 17 people make depositions. No one on the Liberal side of that committee heard a thing that was being said—not one single thing. Of all of the major concerns that were cited by the people who came forward concerned about delisting, concerned about this bill, concerned about how they felt they were not listened to by this government during the whole round of discussions that took place before the budget was produced before this House, not one of them was listened to. In fact, none of the amendments put forward by the opposition were considered. Only a couple of minor government amendments made it through the committee process. Those minor government amendments had nothing whatsoever to do with the people's concerns in Ontario, none of them. They had absolutely nothing to do with those.

Tonight, prior to coming in, I got a phone call from a woman who wanted to talk about the budget. "What, Mr Prue, can you do to stop this horrific budget?" she asked me. "What can you say? How can you convince them?" I had to be very blunt. Her name was Lina Simon. I told her to watch tonight; I hope she is. I told her I was going to stand up here, as were other speakers who were not government members, and we were going to say what was wrong with this budget and that the members

opposite should withdraw it, the members opposite should change it, the members should do what the people of Ontario want, and that is to have a fair tax system if the measures are needed, and, more importantly, not to delist the services that people like Lina Simon rely upon.

She is a pensioner. She gets physiotherapy. She goes out to get that therapy. She is not in a home; she is not served by home care. She doesn't pay now, but she is very upset that on her modest income she will no longer be able to get the services she needs to stay well and stay in her home. She has asked that the members opposite consider her plight and the plight, she is sure, of thousands or perhaps hundreds of thousands of seniors in this province who rely on physiotherapy and chiropractic services. I told her that in the end the government members are 71, the opposition members are 32, and the reality is I did not expect anything to happen tonight except the passage of this bill.

This is a rather arcane bill. It contains a whole bunch of stuff, but ordinary citizens would be surprised because this bill does not contain a single word about the delisting. This bill does not contain a single word about optometrists or chiropractors or physiotherapists. It does not contain a single word about the health tax. But it does contain, and I think people should know, section 17, which was alluded to by my friend from Niagara Centre.

Section 17 reads,

"17. Section 2 of the Taxpayer Protection Act, 1999, as amended by the Statutes of Ontario, 2002, chapter 8, schedule L, section 1, is amended by adding the following subsection:" and, if you can understand this,

"(7) Despite subsection (1), the following provisions may be included in a bill that receives first reading in 2004:

"1. A provision that amends the Income Tax Act to establish a new tax called the Ontario health premium in English and contribution-santé de l'Ontario in French."

What that means, to those who do not know the gobbledegook of this Legislature, is that it allows this government to break the Taxpayer Protection Act, which they were so proud to announce coming up to the election and which they voted for in this very House in 1999. This is an opportunity in this bill, and they are seeking the permission of the Legislature, to break the law of Ontario by the passage of those few words. I have to tell you, Mr Speaker, I think it is a very low day when a bill of this magnitude has a provision inside of it to negate a previous law which this very party voted for.

Interjections.

Mr Prue: Mr Speaker, the members opposite, I know, are not going to support anything except what they have been whipped to support in this House.

Interjections.

Mr Prue: No, no. I am not going to do it.

Mr Baird: You don't have the gonads.

Mr Prue: I'm sure I do. But anyway, I want the Liberals over there to think very long and hard, because three and a half years is a short period of time, even though it seems like forever in politics. You will be

remembered for tonight. You will be remembered by the seniors, you will be remembered by the people who are being taxed, you will be remembered by the people who believed you in the last campaign that you could do 231 good things and not raise their taxes.

This is an opportunity for you, at the very end, to do the right thing. This is an opportunity for all of you to make the right decision. If you cannot vote against your party, if you cannot do it, I would suggest that excusing yourself out the back door for a few minutes might have the same effect. We are going to see those names and your constituents are going to see your names on that bill when it becomes law.

The Acting Speaker: Will the members take their seats? Pursuant to the order of the House of June 10, 2004, I'm now required to put the question.

Mr Sorbara has moved third reading of Bill 83. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This is a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 2121 to 2131.

The Acting Speaker: Mr Sorbara has moved third reading of Bill 83. All those in favour, rise one at a time to be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne
Bentley, Christopher
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Bountrogianni, Marie
Bradley, James J.
Broten, Laurel C.
Brown, Michael A.
Bryant, Michael
Cansfield, Donna H.
Caplan, David
Colle, Mike
Cordiano, Joseph
Craitor, Kim
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Dombrowsky, Leona
Duguid, Brad
Duncan, Dwight

Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Fonseca, Peter
Hoy, Pat
Jeffrey, Linda
Kular, Kuldeep
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Leal, Jeff
Levac, Dave
Marsales, Judy
McGuinty, Dalton
McMeekin, Ted
McNeely, Phil
Milloy, John
Mitchell, Carol
Mossop, Jennifer F.
Oraziotti, David
Peters, Steve
Peterson, Tim

Phillips, Gerry
Qaadri, Shafiq
Racco, Mario G.
Rinaldi, Lou
Ruprecht, Tony
Sandals, Liz
Sergio, Mario
Smith, Monique
Smitherman, George
Sorbara, Greg
Takharr, Harinder S.
Watson, Jim
Wilkinson, John
Wong, Tony C.
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed, please rise one at a time to be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arnott, Ted
Baird, John R.
Barrett, Toby
Chudleigh, Ted
Dunlop, Garfield
Eves, Ernie
Flaherty, Jim
Hampton, Howard

Hardeman, Ernie
Jackson, Cameron
Kormos, Peter
Martel, Shelley
Martiniuk, Gerry
Miller, Norm
Murdoch, Bill
O'Toole, John

Ouellette, Jerry J.
Prue, Michael
Scott, Laurie
Sterling, Norman W.
Wilson, Jim
Witmer, Elizabeth
Yakubuski, John

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 52; the nays are 23.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): Mr Speaker, His Honour awaits.

His Honour the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario entered the chamber of the Legislative Assembly and took his seat upon the throne.

ROYAL ASSENT SANCTION ROYALE

Hon James K. Bartleman (Lieutenant Governor): Pray be seated.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Joseph N. Tascona): May it please Your Honour, the Legislative Assembly of the province has, at its present meetings thereof, passed certain bills to which, in the name of and on behalf of the said Legislative Assembly, I respectfully request Your Honour's assent.

Clerk at the Table (Mr Todd Decker): The following are the titles of the bills to which Your Honour's assent is prayed:

Bill 8, An Act to establish the Ontario Health Quality Council, to enact new legislation concerning health service accessibility and repeal the Health Care Accessibility Act, to provide for accountability in the health service sector, and to amend the Health Insurance Act / *Projet de loi 8, Loi créant le Conseil ontarien de la qualité des services de santé, édictant une nouvelle loi relative à l'accessibilité aux services de santé et abrogeant la Loi sur l'accessibilité aux services de santé, prévoyant l'imputabilité du secteur des services de santé et modifiant la Loi sur l'assurance-santé.*

Bill 49, An Act to prevent the disposal of waste at the Adams Mine site and to amend the Environmental Protection Act in respect of the disposal of waste in lakes / *Projet de loi 49, Loi visant à empêcher l'élimination de déchets à la mine Adams et à modifier la Loi sur la protection de l'environnement en ce qui concerne l'élimination de déchets dans des lacs.*

Bill 83, An Act to implement Budget measures / *Projet de loi 83, Loi mettant en oeuvre certaines mesures budgétaires.*

Bill 94, An Act respecting public accounting / *Projet de loi 94, Loi concernant l'expertise comptable.*

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): In Her Majesty's name, His Honour the Lieutenant Governor doth assent to these bills.

Au nom de sa Majesté, Son Honneur le lieutenant-gouverneur sanctionne ces projets de loi.

His Honour was then pleased to retire.

The Acting Speaker: It being past 9:30 pm, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 pm on Monday.

The House adjourned at 2141.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon / L'hon James K. Bartleman

Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Alvin Curling

Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers

Deputy Clerk / Sous-greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks at the Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Algoma-Manitoulin	Brown, Michael A. (L)	Hamilton East /	Horwith, Andrea (ND)
Ancaster-Dundas-	McMeekin, Ted (L)	Hamilton-Est	
Flamborough-Aldershot		Hamilton Mountain	Bountrogianni, Hon / L'hon Marie (L) Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse, ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
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	Prue, Michael (ND)	Hamilton West /	
Beaches-East York /		Hamilton-Ouest	
Beaches-York-Est		Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and	Dombrowsky, Hon / L'hon Leona (L) Minister of the Environment / ministre de l'Environnement
Bramalea-Gore-Malton-	Kular, Kuldip (L)	Addington	Mitchell, Carol (L)
Springdale			Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Brampton Centre /	Jeffrey, Linda (L)	Huron-Bruce	Gerretsen, Hon / L'hon John (L) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement, ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées
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Brampton West-Mississauga /	Dhillion, Vic (L)		
Brampton-Ouest-Mississauga		Kingston and the Islands /	
Brant	Levac, Dave (L)	Kingston et les îles	
Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)		
Burlington	Jackson, Cameron (PC)	Kitchener Centre /	Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Kitchener-Centre	Van Bommel, Maria (L)
Chatham-Kent Essex	Hoy, Pat (L)	Kitchener-Waterloo	Sterling, Norman W. (PC)
Davenport	Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	Runciman, Robert W. (PC)
Don Valley East /	Caplan, Hon / L'hon David (L) Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy House Leader / ministre du Renouvellement de l'infrastructure publique, leader parlementaire adjoint	Lanark-Carleton	Matthews, Deborah (L)
Don Valley-Est	Wynne, Kathleen O. (L)	Leeds-Grenville	
		London North Centre /	
Don Valley West /		London-Centre-Nord	
Don Valley-Ouest		London West /	Bentley, Hon / L'hon Christopher (L) Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail
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	O'Toole, John (PC)	London-Fanshawe	Wong, Tony C. (L)
Durham	Colle, Mike (L)	Markham	Takhar, Hon / L'hon Harinder S. (L) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports
Eglinton-Lawrence	Peters, Hon / L'hon Steve (L) Minister of Agriculture and Food / ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation	Mississauga Centre /	Fonseca, Peter (L)
Elgin-Middlesex-London	Hudak, Tim (PC)	Mississauga-Centre	
	Crozier, Bruce (L) Deputy Speaker, Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Vice-Président, Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative	Mississauga East /	
Erie-Lincoln	Cansfield, Donna H. (L)	Mississauga-Est	Peterson, Tim (L)
Essex		Mississauga South /	
		Mississauga-Sud	Delaney, Bob (L)
Etobicoke Centre /		Mississauga West /	
Etobicoke-Centre		Mississauga-Ouest	Baird, John R. (PC)
Etobicoke North /	Qaadri, Shafiq (L)	Nepean-Carleton	Kormos, Peter (ND)
Etobicoke-Nord		Niagara Centre /	
Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Broten, Laurel C. (L)	Niagara-Centre	Craitor, Kim (L)
Glengarry-Prescott-Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Niagara Falls	Martel, Shelley (ND)
Guelph-Wellington	Sandals, Liz (L)	Nickel Belt	Smith, Monique M. (L)
Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant	Barrett, Toby (PC)	Nipissing	Rinaldi, Lou (L)
Haliburton-Victoria-Brock	Scott, Laurie (PC)	Northumberland	Klees, Frank (PC)
Halton	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Oak Ridges	

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Oakville	Flynn, Kevin Daniel (L)	Stoney Creek	Mossop, Jennifer F. (L)
Oshawa	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Stormont-Dundas- Charlottenburgh	Brownell, Jim (L)
Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Patten, Richard (L)	Sudbury	Bartolucci, Hon / L'hon Rick (L) Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	McGuinty, Hon / L'hon Dalton (L) Premier and President of the Executive Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif, ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales	Thornhill	Racco, Mario G. (L)
Ottawa West-Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest-Nepean	Watson, Hon / L'hon Jim (L) Minister of Consumer and Business Services / ministre des Services aux consommateurs et aux entreprises	Thunder Bay-Atikokan	Mauro, Bill (L)
Ottawa-Orléans	McNeely, Phil (L)	Thunder Bay-Superior North / Thunder Bay-Superior- Nord	Gravelle, Michael (L)
Ottawa-Vanier	Meilleur, Hon / L'hon Madeleine (L) Minister of Culture, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre de la Culture, ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones	Timiskaming-Cochrane	Ramsay, Hon / L'hon David (L) Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles
Oxford	Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Timmins-James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	Bisson, Gilles (ND)
Parkdale-High Park	Kennedy, Hon / L'hon Gerard (L) Minister of Education / ministre de l'Éducation	Toronto Centre-Rosedale / Toronto-Centre-Rosedale	Smitherman, Hon / L'hon George (L) Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Parry Sound-Muskoka	Miller, Norm (PC)	Toronto-Danforth	Churley, Marilyn (ND)
Perth-Middlesex	Wilkinson, John (L)	Trinity-Spadina	Marchese, Rosario (ND)
Peterborough	Leal, Jeff (L)	Vaughan-King-Aurora	Sorbara, Hon / L'hon Greg (L) Minister of Finance / ministre des Finances
Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge	Arthurs, Wayne (L)	Waterloo-Wellington	Arnott, Ted (PC) First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Prince Edward-Hastings	Parsons, Ernie (L)	Whitby-Ajax	Flaherty, Jim (PC)
Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	Yakabuski, John (PC)	Willowdale	Zimmer, David (L)
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Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	Berardinetti, Lorenzo (L)	York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston	Cordiano, Hon / L'hon Joseph (L) Minister of Economic Development and Trade / ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Scarborough-Agincourt	Phillips, Hon / L'hon Gerry (L) Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement	York West / York-Ouest	Sergio, Mario (L)
Scarborough-Rouge River	Curling, Hon / L'hon Alvin (L) Speaker / Président		
Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Dunlop, Garfield (PC)		
Simcoe-Grey	Wilson, Jim (PC)		
St Catharines	Bradley, Hon / L'hon James J. (L) Minister of Tourism and Recreation / ministre du Tourisme et des Loisirs		
St Paul's	Bryant, Hon / L'hon Michael (L) Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones, ministre responsable du Renouveau démocratique		

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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Peter Fonseca, Jeff Leal, Rosario Marchese,
Ted McMeekin, Khalil Ramal, Kathleen O. Wynne
Clerk / Greffière: Anne Stokes

CONTENTS

Thursday 17 June 2004

THIRD READINGS

Budget Measures Act, 2004,

Bill 83, *Mr Sorbara*

Mr Sorbara	3051
Mr Duguid.....	3053
Mrs Sandals.....	3054
Mr McNeely.....	3055
Mr Colle	3056
Mr Barrett.....	3057
Mr Yakabuski.....	3059
Mr Ouellette	3060
Mr Arnott	3061
Mrs Witmer	3062
Mr Miller.....	3062
Mr O'Toole	3063
Mr Dunlop.....	3064
Mr Kormos.....	3065
Mr Prue	3068
Agreed to.....	3072

ROYAL ASSENT

The Lieutenant Governor	3072
-------------------------------	------

TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Jeudi 17 juin 2004

TROISIÈME LECTURE

Loi de 2004 sur les mesures

budgétaires, projet de loi 83,

M. Sorbara

Adoptée	3072
---------------	------

SANCTION ROYALE

Le lieutenant-gouverneur	3072
--------------------------------	------



No. 65

N° 65

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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

First Session, 38th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 38^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 21 June 2004

Lundi 21 juin 2004



Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 21 June 2004

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 21 juin 2004

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): For two years now, I have been advocating for legislation to protect the right of professional firefighters to serve as volunteers on their free time and in their home communities. The professional firefighters' union wants to force double-hatters to resign as volunteers. If this happens, small-town and rural fire departments will be weakened and communities will be less safe.

The Minister of Community Safety knows that I recently received a letter from the fire marshal, Bernard Moyle, on this issue. You know that a key part of the fire marshal's job is to advise the provincial government on fire standards and legislation. In the fire marshal's letter, he expressed appreciation for my efforts to resolve this issue and protect double-hatters, and he reaffirmed his support for legislative action to resolve the problem.

Just last week, we learned from the Ottawa firefighters' union Web site that the Ontario professional firefighters' union has lifted a moratorium on charges against double-hatters, essentially declaring open season on these firefighters. The Web site actually encourages union members to seek out double-hatters, urge them to resign as volunteers and threaten them with charges if they don't, possibly leading to their expulsion from the union and the loss of their full-time jobs.

The minister knows that the fire marshal, in this context, has warned that this situation carries with it "a potential serious threat to public safety." This is the opinion of the fire marshal. Once again, I call upon the minister to avoid this threat and protect community safety by immediately introducing a government bill to protect double-hatters, before the summer recess, and send a signal to the union leaders that community safety in rural Ontario is more important than their union membership drive.

NATIONAL ABORIGINAL DAY

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I'm pleased to rise today to recognize National Aboriginal Day on behalf of the Ontario government. June 21 was designated National Aboriginal Day in 1996 to celebrate

the cultures and contributions of Canada's First Nations, Inuit and Metis peoples. June 21 was chosen because of the cultural significance of the summer solstice, because many aboriginal groups mark this day as a time to engage in traditional ceremonies.

Last week, the minister responsible for native affairs, Michael Bryant, attended the 30th annual All Ontario Chiefs Conference held at Hiawatha First Nation, where he discussed Ontario's new approach on aboriginal matters. This new approach will be based on co-operation and mutual respect. We will involve the aboriginal leadership in developing this approach.

At the All Ontario Chiefs Conference, the minister also reinforced Ontario's commitment to resolving pending land claims. This government has already invested more than \$190 million in the aboriginal healing and wellness strategy for a five-year period and has committed \$7 million annually for post-secondary education for aboriginal students.

The McGuinty government hopes that by working cooperatively with these communities, we can help improve the lives of aboriginal peoples in Ontario. The quality of life of all Ontarians improves when we have strong and prosperous aboriginal communities. Please join me in acknowledging the significance of National Aboriginal Day and the important contribution of aboriginal people to the province of Ontario.

BONNIE BRAE HEALTH CARE CENTRE

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): Today I stand to ask the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to make a decision in regard to a long-term-care facility in my riding of Oxford. Last August, the residents of Bonnie Brae Health Care Centre were notified of the decision of Tri-County Mennonite Homes to purchase the centre for a new community lifestyle project. The residents and staff were excited to hear the news and have been part of the planning process to upgrade the facility from a D to an A standard.

But here it is, 10 months later, and we're being told the entire project is on hold until the Ministry of Long-Term Care's licensing division has made a firm decision to allow the transfer of the beds. They had no information on the status of the project, even though public hearings have been held and there were no objections.

I know long-term care is of utmost importance to Minister Smitherman. The minister has often said the government is committed to ensuring that the people in long-term-care facilities live in dignity and have the

highest possible quality of life. Well, Mr Smitherman, here is a resident council telling you what they need to do that. I urge you to fulfill your commitment to the residents of Bonnie Brae and make the long-overdue decision to let them proceed with the renovations of their facility. Follow through with your promise to let them live in dignity and have the highest possible quality of life by signing off on this project today.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): I have a statement today about local democracy. It's about what happened in Quebec yesterday, and I hope everybody was watching that.

Right across Quebec, people had an opportunity in some 89 municipalities to vote on their local futures. They had an opportunity to vote—

Interjections.

Mr Prue: —if you'll stop yelling to hear—on how they will be governed locally. That is something that might be foreign and anathema to some of the members opposite, but that I would think is a fundamental right all the same.

Many of those communities, given the opportunity, voted to remain merged with their new municipalities. Others voted to demerge, because they felt it was in their own best interests not to be part of a larger municipality. The issue is not how they voted; the issue is that they were allowed to vote in the first place and that the government was willing to take whatever their votes were and move forward on those referendums.

I contrast that with the government of Ontario, where you have denied those same rights to the people of Ancaster, Dundas and Flamborough. I ask you to contrast that with the government of Ontario, where you are denying democracy and the vote of the people of Kawartha Lakes.

These people are not going to go away. They are going to continue to advocate for local democracy. They are going to continue to fight for local government. Some are here today, and they are asking this government to listen and to act. If they can do it in Quebec, you can do it too.

1340

BLYTH FESTIVAL

Mrs Carol Mitchell (Huron-Bruce): This past Friday, I had the privilege of attending the Blyth Festival grand opening gala dinner in Blyth, Ontario. The Blyth Centre for the Arts, including the Blyth Festival, was founded in 1975. It is unique in that it produces theatre that reflects the culture and interests of people from southwestern Ontario, of which I am especially proud.

Blyth has celebrated our life in small-town Ontario very well with its development of new plays. This year, Cricket and Claudette portrays scandal and romance at the village dumpsite. Test Drive is also on this year's

play list. It celebrates the family business of the member for Parry Sound-Muskoka.

I have a coupon for a couple of tickets for the member, so when he is ready he can call and dicker with the box office to set a date.

I also encourage everyone here to drive to the beautiful village of Blyth, Ontario, and enjoy a wonderful, truly Canadian theatrical production.

WEST LINCOLN MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): I have to ask, if it's good for the goose, is it good for the gander? Certainly the folks in the Sudbury and Thunder Bay communities will be welcoming the announcement by the McGuinty government and the Ministry of Health that they are receiving 80% of funding toward their capital projects. But if they get 80%, what about West Lincoln Memorial Hospital in Grimsby, the hospital that serves the people of Lincoln, West Lincoln, east Stoney Creek and the surrounding area? There are great, talented, hard-working people there. It has an excellent reputation, but it's a tired old building in need of renewal.

Locally, citizens have raised millions of dollars, expanding from 60 to 85 beds, new equipment and better services. But despite a lot of sweet words and promises, there's no indication that that hospital will receive any money from the McGuinty government, let alone the 80% level that Sudbury and Thunder Bay are receiving. Surely if these hospitals are receiving 80% from provincial funds, local residents of West Niagara have a very fair expectation that they too will receive that 80% share. It's certainly justified by the need, the growth in the community and local generosity.

If that 80% share is good for those two hospitals, it should be good for the people of West Lincoln as well.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

Mr John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex): My constituents in Perth-Middlesex remember a chap named Tony Clement as the Minister of Health who brought private MRIs and other diagnostic exams to Ontario. He was the minister who allowed private MRI clinics to poach staff from public institutions despite repeated empty promises that this would not happen. Two-Tier Tony is now running for a party that, if elected, could force private health care delivery on the provinces, in violation of the Canada Health Act. He would be ably assisted by his fellow traveller, Ralph Klein.

I for one—and I know my constituents feel the same way—do not want to walk into an emergency room or doctor's office only to be judged by the size of my wallet rather than the reality of my pain or illness. That's why I'm glad our Liberal government has delivered on our commitment to improve the public delivery of health care in Ontario.

Our Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act reaffirms Ontario's commitment to universally accessible, publicly funded health care. We are investing in

nine new, publicly funded MRI and CT sites, and we are funding the first northern Ontario medical school in 30 years. Our actions demonstrate our commitment to the health care system that we can all be proud of, a health care system that is fully accessible to all Ontarians, not just for those who can afford it.

My message to Two-Tier Tony and King Ralph: Hands off our public health care.

GAY PRIDE WEEK

Ms Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West): Today is the start of Toronto's 24th annual Pride Week. Over a million people will participate in this year's festival, named Bursting with Fruit Flavours. There are 18 official events, including the pride and remembrance five-kilometre run, a new speaker series with Winnipeg mayor Glen Murray and Ann-Marie MacDonald, and the open-air church service led by Reverend Brent Hawkes, who is one of the original champions of Pride in Toronto. All of that leads up to the parade on Sunday.

Thank you to Pride Toronto co-chairs Ayse Turak and Fred Pitt and the 700 volunteers who make Pride possible.

Pride is about coming together to celebrate the fight for equality and dignity for members of Ontario's lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and two-spirited community. It's about people of all ages, from all walks of life, some of whom live closeted lives 51 weeks of the year, and allowing them to have a brief window on what it would be like to live in a world without homophobia.

It's about families celebrating their diversity. There are a lot of "I love my gay sister," "I love my gay brother, uncle, aunt, grandmother" buttons worn during Pride.

If you join us on Sunday for the parade, you will hear the warmest and most enthusiastic cheer for PFLAG, which is Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays. That's an organization that understands that many gay, lesbian and transgendered people are ostracized from their families, and they are support for those people.

Today I ask you to join me in celebrating Pride. Next Monday we will, as a country, make an important choice. We will choose to build on our fragile successes and continue to promote equality and dignity for all of us, or we will vote to turn back the clock. I hope you will vote to build on our successes with a government—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Thank you.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): At the end of each session, for the last four years, I was pleased to give the government an evaluation of how it has done so far. To be fair, I believe I need to do it for our government.

If we look at what we've done over the last few months, we've uploaded public health costs instead of downloading them. I'll explain uploading to you afterward.

We've created 8,000 full-time nursing positions. They're not Hula Hoop workers; they're nurses who provide quality care.

We're providing free vaccinations to children. The public health officers begged you for the last four years to do it. We've done it.

We're investing in our children. It is common sense to have classes of 20. It's only common sense. You ruined that phrase, and we're taking it back.

We're investing in our cities. You created gridlock over eight years. Accidents went down because no cars moved on our highways under your jurisdiction. One cent per litre of gasoline will go to municipalities, followed by two cents. It's too bad you didn't listen to me in the last four years.

We're taking care of those most in need. We will increase care at home for 97,000 Ontarians who want to stay at home, not in long-term care.

We're opening an additional 3,760 long-term-care beds. They don't belong in hospitals; they belong in their homes in long-term care.

We've increased, for the first time in 11 years—and both parties can listen to this one—the basic allowance and maximum shelter allowance for ODSP and Ontario Works.

We're protecting Ontario's drinking water. Shame on you. We're doing it.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Mr Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly, pursuant to standing order 109(b).

Clerk at the Table (Ms Lisa Freedman): Mr Racco from the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly presents the committee's report prescribing the ministries and offices assigned to certain standing committees.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr Racco: No, thank you.

The Speaker: Pursuant to standing order 109(b), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

TRANSITIONAL PHYSICIAN PAYMENT REVIEW ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004

SUR LA RÉVISION PROVISOIRE DES PAIEMENTS D'HONORAIRES DE MÉDECINS

Mr Smitherman moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 104, An Act to amend the Health Insurance Act and the Ministry of Health Appeal and Review Boards Act, 1998 / Projet de loi 104, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'assurance-santé et la Loi de 1998 sur les commissions d'appel et de révision du ministère de la Santé.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Briefly, I've had the opportunity to share this bill with both opposition parties and with key stakeholders. The request for submissions to Justice Peter Cory's review of the medical audit practice in Ontario was posted in major daily newspapers today. This bill would temporarily halt the activities of the MRC while we ensure that the MRC process is fair and accountable to the people of Ontario, to the positions and to the government.

Pending Justice Cory's review, the legislation would put in place a process that would give doctors the choice to freeze their case or to pursue an alternate process in the meantime.

1350

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I seek unanimous consent of this chamber to proceed with second and third readings of this bill.

The Speaker: The member from Niagara Centre has requested second and third readings of the bill. Do we have unanimous consent? I heard a no.

LOI DE 2004 SUR L'HARMONISATION DE LA TERMINOLOGIE FISCALE

TAX TERMINOLOGY HARMONIZATION ACT, 2004

M. Sorbara propose la première lecture du projet de loi suivant :

Projet de loi 105, Loi révisant la terminologie utilisée dans la version française de certaines lois / Bill 105, An Act to revise terminology used in the French version of certain statutes.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

L'hon. Greg Sorbara (ministre des Finances): Ce projet de loi vise à changer la terminologie utilisée dans la version française des lois fiscales de l'Ontario afin que cela corresponde à la nouvelle terminologie utilisée par le gouvernement fédéral dans la Loi de l'impôt sur le revenu du Canada.

Nous diffuserons ce projet de loi pendant l'été afin de recueillir des commentaires. J'espère que nous pourrons obtenir le consentement unanime de tous les partis afin que le projet de loi puisse être adopté rapidement à notre retour à l'automne.

BUDGET MEASURES ACT, 2004 (NO. 2)

LOI DE 2004 SUR LES MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES (N^O 2)

Mr Sorbara moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 106, An Act to implement Budget measures and amend the Crown Forest Sustainability Act, 1994 / Projet de loi 106, Loi mettant en oeuvre certaines mesures budgétaires et modifiant la Loi de 1994 sur la durabilité des forêts de la Couronne.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion, say "aye."

All those against, say "nay."

I think the ayes have it.

Call in the members. There will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1354 to 1359.

The Speaker: All those in favour, please rise and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Peters, Steve
Bartolucci, Rick	Fonseca, Peter	Phillips, Gerry
Bentley, Christopher	Gerretsen, John	Pupatello, Sandra
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Gravelle, Michael	Qaadri, Shafiq
Bountrogianni, Marie	Kennedy, Gerard	Racco, Mario G.
Broten, Laurel C.	Kwinter, Monte	Ramal, Khalil
Brown, Michael A.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Ramsay, David
Brownell, Jim	Levac, Dave	Rinaldi, Lou
Cansfield, Donna H.	Marsales, Judy	Sandals, Liz
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Mathews, Deborah	Sergio, Mario
Colle, Mike	Mauro, Bill	Sorbara, Greg
Cordiano, Joseph	McNeely, Phil	Takhar, Harinder S.
Crozier, Bruce	Meilleur, Madeleine	Watson, Jim
Delaney, Bob	Milloy, John	Wilkinson, John
Di Cocco, Caroline	Mitchell, Carol	Wong, Tony C.
Dombrowsky, Leona	Oraziotti, David	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Duguid, Brad	Parsons, Ernie	Zimmer, David
Duncan, Dwight	Patten, Richard	

The Speaker: All those against, please rise and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Klees, Frank	Prue, Michael
Baird, John R.	Kormos, Peter	Runciman, Robert W.
Barrett, Toby	Marchese, Rosario	Scott, Laurie
Flaherty, Jim	Martiniuk, Gerry	Sterling, Norman W.
Hardeman, Ernie	Miller, Norm	Tascona, Joseph N.
Horwath, Andrea	O'Toole, John	Witmer, Elizabeth
Hudak, Tim	Ouellette, Jerry J.	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 53; the nays are 20.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): This is the second bill that I've introduced to implement our Plan for Change. Among its provisions is a proposal for the Ontario health premium, which will help transform health care in the province of Ontario. The bill also proposes the enactment of the Trust Beneficiaries' Liability Act, 2004, as anticipated in the budget and as requested by my colleague Gerry Phillips, the Chair of Management Board. In addition, the bill contains an amendment to the Crown Forest Sustainability Act that my colleague

David Ramsay, the Minister of Natural Resources, has requested.

I do look forward to discussing the bill with members during debate in this House.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

AIR QUALITY

Hon Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment): Today I attended the smog summit at Toronto city hall. This event is attended by some of the most influential experts in the field of air emissions and smog-causing pollutants.

The smog summit is usually an opportunity for governments to highlight their actions on cleaner air. For the past few years, the previous government has shown up empty-handed, if they showed up at all. Today, our government has changed that. Today, we unveiled our five-point plan for cleaner air, the most far-reaching commitment on air quality in this province in 30 years. Our five-point plan is built on the basic principle that people's health should not be compromised by air emissions, and our plan has real, concrete, measurable results.

Our five-point plan for cleaner air limits reduces emissions of harmful pollutants. It is built on the best science, and it puts a priority on actions that will reduce the risk to human health. It tackles major smog-causing pollutants as well as lesser-known substances.

Our plan sets tough new limits for the two most smog-causing pollutants: nitrogen oxides and sulphur dioxide. These limits will apply to a whole range of industries that never had limits before: the iron and steel sector, the cement industry, petroleum refineries, pulp and paper and the producers of glass and carbon black.

Second, our plan sets out right now that these limits will get even lower in future years. This means that our pollution rules not only apply to more sectors than ever before but they will make each of these sectors keep improving.

Third, our government is looking beyond the big pollutants like nitrogen oxides and sulphur dioxide. Today, I am announcing proposals for new and updated air emission standards for 29 different substances. These substances include carcinogens and toxins that could pose a more serious threat to human health. In some cases, we are proposing standards for the very first time.

The fourth point of our plan is better modelling. This means using newer, better science to get a clearer picture of how air pollution gets dispersed. Ontario has been using a 30-year-old dispersion model. If you think about how much our science has improved in that time, it is clear that we need to make changes.

Finally, the fifth part of our plan is a new, risk-based approach to implementing air standards and models. We look at the effects on the local communities and consider

the efforts that local businesses are making to improve air quality.

The McGuinty government is committed to delivering real, positive change to improve the quality of life enjoyed in our communities. Ontarians deserve safe, clean, livable communities to call home. We are paying too big a price with our health, with our prosperity and with our ability to provide proper health care to those affected by poor air. In one five-point plan we are making up for a decade of half-hearted measures by previous governments and setting the course for a future of cleaner air, better scientific knowledge and a stronger link to human health. This plan will reduce air emissions; it will reduce the risks to human health; it will decrease the likelihood of smog days in the future. It puts the needs of Ontarians first and ensures that, even though it is tough, industry can find ways to meet it.

Our five-point plan for cleaner air works for Ontarians, and our government works for Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Responses?

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): I've just returned from the Toronto smog summit. As far as the comment about showing up, I can't speak for the previous Toronto government. At this Toronto summit, the minister announced nitrogen oxide and sulphur dioxide limits for heavy industry, including Stelco, Dofasco, cement, Esso and other refineries—I'll point out that Ontario hasn't built an oil refinery since 1978, and I don't think this is going to help—the pulp and paper industry, glass and carbon black.

This continues the work done by previous governments, NDP and PC, to introduce both NO_x and SO_x limits to the electricity sector and non-ferrous smelting. I'll point out that these efforts have already produced important gains in emission reductions. OPG Nanticoke, for example, has dropped sulphur dioxide and nitrogen oxide emissions, including the implementation of the SCR, the selective catalytic reduction units. These installations at Nanticoke and Lambton have served to reduce nitrogen oxide emissions by 80% from the units to which they're attached. Due to these and other efforts, nitrogen oxide emissions have dropped more than 50% from 1984 at OPG Nanticoke; sulphur dioxide has fallen more than 60% in that same time period. This new regulation would require significant NO_x and SO_x emission reductions by 2010 and further reductions by 2015. That's a fair bit down the road.

Again, I point out that these initiatives build on what I consider the full-hearted work of previous governments. The Fraser Institute reports that Canada's environment is markedly healthier than it was 30 years ago. In fact, 84% of environmental indicators have improved since the 1970s. Airborne sulphur dioxide has decreased by 73% between 1974 and 2001. Levels of particulates are down by over 50%.

That said, there is more to be done, of course. I'm happy to see that this recent report outlines Ontario's implementation plan for Canada-wide standards for particulate matter and ozone, something our Conservative

government committed to in the year 2000. Let's look at some of the clean air incentives outlined in the discussion paper presented. The government wants to exempt biodiesel from fuel tax, exempt natural gas and ethanol, provide a lower tax rate for propane—a very laudable concept, and I'm pleased to assure the minister that these measures do work. In fact, all these measures were in place during our government's term in office and we were able to reduce emissions by 12%.

1410

I'll turn to page 18 of the accompanying minister's report, entitled *Taking Stock and Closing Gaps: Ontario on Track to Meet Emission Reduction Targets*: "Ontario's smog reduction efforts have been successful. Over the last decade, emissions of the four key pollutants have been declining, even while Ontario was going through a period of strong economic growth."

We thank you, Minister, for that comment. It's nice to know that people on the other side of the House recognize the success we've had in reducing emissions. We appreciate the acknowledgement that strong economic growth is possible while we continue to protect the environment.

I will point out the minister's message on page 3 of the report: "Government is working to improve Ontario's Drive Clean program to make it even more successful in reducing smog-causing emissions from vehicles." Only three months ago, this same minister was reported to be musing about phasing out Drive Clean. Which is it? We know auto emissions are the cause of 60% of our domestically produced smog. It's essential that we continue, and this government continue, the work our government started—a far superior strategy to speaking out of both sides of one's mouth.

You know, this government is actually going backward when it comes to providing incentives to reduce emissions. We put in place a program that would provide incentives for businesses to engage in self-generation of electricity and for people to purchase energy-efficient equipment. What did this government do? Their broken-promise budget has cancelled these incentives. They have told businesses that they're on their own.

I regret that this report doesn't even address transboundary air pollution.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): The finance minister just got out of the picture in the nick of time. He was over here trying to give me some advice as to how I should respond to this statement.

I don't know if anybody in this Legislature—I'm sure they do—has children or grandchildren or a parent or somebody in their family who suffers from asthma or some other kind of respiratory illness. I know I've mentioned in this House before that I have a little grandson who has been hospitalized on several occasions and was close to death on a couple of those occasions. I saw this little boy in a hospital bed, hooked up to every machine possible, with a mask on. It's one of the scariest, most heartbreaking things you can ever see.

More and more children are being affected on smog days. As you know, seniors can't go out, kids with

asthma can't go out, and we know that smog is contributing to that. So any announcement that attempts to deal with smog is always welcome. I'm sure the minister and the government would love everybody to stand up and applaud the measures today, but as a comprehensive smog strategy, it comes up rather short. Let me tell you why.

The minister's own paper says that transportation produces 63% of NO_x emissions and electricity produces 15%. That's not to say they're not significant and don't need to be dealt with. The problem here is that there is no plan to reduce or relook at the building of a ton of new highways in the Golden Horseshoe area. In fact, at the greenbelt legislation hearings I put through a number of amendments to deal with expanding highways within the greenbelt area, and that was rejected. So an amendment that could have prevented at least a review of some of these highways from crossing the greenbelt, as well as infrastructure—the big pipe in King City just got permission to go ahead.

The reason I'm bringing all these things up is that—you've heard me talk before in here, and we'll be debating the greenbelt soon—it is directly related to smog because of the inadequacy of the greenbelt legislation which is coming through this House very soon. Minister—and I'm talking directly to the Minister of Municipal Affairs now—I put forward amendments that would have dealt with the big holes, Mack-truck-like holes, in the legislation.

I have to say, the Tory members voted against me, but I expected them to. However, the Liberal members voted against every one of my amendments. The reason why I'm bringing this up is because of what we're referring to as leapfrog development. That is in the Simcoe area. It has been pointed out time and time again that allowing development to leapfrog over the little greenbelt area is actually—and it's happening as we speak—going to increase transportation use. That is a fact. Nobody is denying that. The government is allowing that to go ahead.

The other thing is, when the Premier announced his plan for funding the TTC, it—actually, the Tories will like this—turned out to be less than the Conservatives had committed. This is hardly the bold new plan that we needed.

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): That's not true.

Ms Churley: It's true. It is true.

The government's commitment to fight urban sprawl is also less than meets the eye. The leapfrog development will mean tens of thousands of more cars on the roads, causing more and more smog.

I'm also worried about the timetable on the coal-fired plants. We're not seeing much movement there. We're not seeing nearly enough on conservation and creation of more green power.

On the conservation front, the government thinks that smart meters in homes will deliver what they need. They

should get serious about conservation instead of relying on gimmicks like this.

Finally, better standards are a good thing, but they don't mean much without enforcement. Your own budget—get it out; page 12—shows that the Ministry of the Environment is one of 15 ministries about to take an average cut of 12% in its operating budget. At the end of your term, those ministries, including the Ministry of the Environment, will have 12% less purchasing power than they have this year. That will mean you'll be laying off inspectors, scientists and enforcement officers, not hiring new ones to make sure that these new standards are adhered to.

As usual, the Liberals have rolled out something that is far less than meets the eye.

DOMINIC AGOSTINO

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I believe we have unanimous consent for each party to speak for up to five minutes to pay tribute to our dear friend and colleague, Dominic Agostino.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Do we have unanimous consent to pay tribute to our late colleague, Dominic Agostino? Agreed.

The member from Hamilton West.

Hon Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): Mr Speaker, if Dominic was here, he would have heckled you for that. It's Hamilton Mountain.

I'm honoured to have this opportunity to pay tribute to our friend, Dominic Agostino. Dominic was a hard-working and dedicated member of provincial Parliament. He embodied the very essence of what it means to work for the public good. I know he earned the respect and admiration of all of us in this Legislature and indeed the province.

I had heard about Dominic even before I met him. This probably comes as no surprise. At the tender age of 20, he was elected as a trustee to the Hamilton-Wentworth separate school board and was re-elected for three subsequent terms. He was the youngest trustee ever to be elected in Ontario at that time. Then in 1987 he was elected to Hamilton city council and Hamilton-Wentworth regional council in a by-election. He obviously worked hard for his constituents because they returned him to council, re-electing him three more times.

I met Dominic 10 years ago, when I sought the nomination in my riding. The first thing I noticed was, he had an aura about him. There were always a lot of people around Dominic wherever he went. I was in awe that someone so young could command such fierce loyalty and respect. He was the go-to guy in Hamilton. If you wanted anything done, you knew Dominic could help you out. If you had Dominic Agostino on your team, you were very lucky.

In 1995, he was elected as the MPP for Hamilton East. In opposition, he held a number of important posts, including chief whip and the critic for labour, housing and community and social services. He was a tireless worker for the people in his riding, and they rewarded him by returning him to Queen's Park in 1999 and in 2003.

1420

Dominic had a reputation for jumping on government issues that he felt needed attention. I'm sure everyone remembers the time he wanted to make a point about the quality of our air and he wore a gas mask in this House. Apparently, that stopped him from being heard, but he made his point nonetheless.

This kind of creative thinking made him a popular member among the press gallery. You could always count on getting a great quote from Dominic, and he freely admitted that he liked to dominate the media. In fact, because of this and his electoral successes, he was named the Dominator in Hamilton—a big headline in 1999. But not only did he give colourful remarks; he had the research and the work to back it up. I think that's why he was respected. He had substance behind the style.

Dominic drew strength from his roots growing up in a working-class neighbourhood. He was always a great defender of the little guy. He often worked to help injured workers in his community because of his own father's struggles. In 2003, he introduced an amendment to the Occupational Health and Safety Amendment Act to increase the penalties for workplaces that did not take action to ensure a safe work environment.

Dominic was a strong advocate for his constituents. Last year, a woman in his riding approached him for help because she needed a new wheelchair but she wasn't getting anyone to listen to her case. He helped her cut through the bureaucratic red tape, which took several months. But they persevered, and the woman got the assistance she needed. She received her wheelchair two days before he died. That was typical of Dominic: his passion to right wrongs right to the end.

It's something that I know his family can attest to. I've had the honour of meeting members of his family several times, and they're here today: his mother, Teresa, whose house was always open; his brother, Ralph; his sister, Mary; nephews Michael, Nicholas and Sammy; and niece Krystina. Anthony is graduating today; otherwise he'd be here as well. We all know how many times Dominic bragged about his nieces and nephews.

Signora Teresa's house was always open for barbecues. I remember one summer I went to one. There were wall-to-wall people in and out of your house, Signora. I said to Dominic, "Where's your mom?" "Oh, she's in Italy." I thought, "This is probably the last time we'll see Mrs Agostino's house for one of these," but every year you were there for your boy, for us.

He often made a world of difference to people needing support and help. If that isn't what public service is all about, then I don't know what is.

Dominic was instrumental in helping me find my way as a politician when I was first elected in 1999. All of us know how daunting it can be to arrive here. Right after the Roy Green show the morning after the election in 1999, I said, "Dominic, can we have a coffee?" He said, "Sure." I said, "OK, now what do I do?" He lent me one of his assistants for the summer, who showed me the ropes.

Working alongside him was a wonderful experience. He had an incredible sense of humour, and he kept me in stitches, often at the Tories' expense. He loved heckling. We sat close together in opposition, and every day in question period, I was wondering what he would say next. I literally missed him when he was away here and there. I literally missed him. I said, "It's not the same without Dominic here." And it's not the same without Dominic here.

We were more than just colleagues. I felt he was more like my brother in here—sometimes my little brother and sometimes my big brother. We shared many opinions and views and believed what we were doing made a difference.

Dominic will be remembered for his dedication, tenacity and drive. He will always be remembered for his love of politics and the love of the people he served.

A great philosopher once said, "When you are sorrowful, look again in your heart, and you shall see that in truth you are weeping for that which has been your delight." Dominic was the delight of his family, friends and colleagues. Signora Teresa, he was a delight to me as a friend. He held a special place in my heart—indeed, in all our hearts—and he will always be remembered with great affection.

Lui sarà sempre con noi, Signora Teresa.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): It's a great privilege for me to speak on behalf of the official opposition, and certainly a greater privilege to speak about my good friend Dominic Agostino.

The worth of every human being can be measured, and it can be measured in so many ways. But there's perhaps no greater tribute to Dominic than the outpouring of grief from those whose lives he touched following his passing just a few short months ago. At his funeral in Hamilton and at a memorial service here in Toronto, people from so many walks of life showed their deep affection for Dominic. People from every walk of life—from frail Italian seniors to working people, to students, to business people, to three former Premiers—all paid tribute to him by their mere presence.

Hamilton is the kind of place that is part big city and part small town. I can remember en route from the funeral to the burial that the member for Whitby-Ajax said, as we looked out the car window, that, wow, Dominic was a big man in this town. Police officers had blocked off the entire route through town in honour of the contribution that Dominic had made to his home community. Even more impressively, many people stopped by the side of the road, with their grocery bag

next to their feet and their children at their side, or simply looked up from their porch to pay respect.

In the game of life, if the person who dies with the most friends wins, then Dominic indeed was a winner. He represented the very best in public service and commitment to those he served. He had a rare ability to bring people of very diverse backgrounds together, and that certainly was the case following his death. I think of a number of incidents. I think that maybe the Minister of the Environment isn't such a bad person after all, after she kept passing me tissues during the funeral.

I recall being at the memorial service, where Jaime Watt gave a very glowing introduction to our Premier. I can recall even the Premier's comments at the funeral service, where for a few short moments—or maybe even the whole day; I'll say the whole day—the Premier was even my Premier on that day. Dominic was very proud to be a member of your team.

Throughout his time in government he strongly, and even forcefully, stood up for the people he served and represented, and it was always easy for him to do so because he was totally in sync with the people he represented. It was always easy for him to do so. Some say there is no room for idealism in politics, and I can certainly say without a doubt in my mind that it sure wasn't Dominic Agostino who said that. He was a principled politician who never forgot who sent him to this place.

Sometimes in public life we're all tempted to back away from a challenge, that it is better to simply remain silent on an issue that may not enjoy public support in the short term. Such was the case in the first year of the Harris government, back in 1995, in the thick of the Common Sense Revolution. Some were licking their wounds from electoral defeat, but Dominic stood up and aggressively fought for those he cared about and passionately supported. I think of his one-man crusade against welfare reform back in 1995 and 1996, a policy that wasn't easy to attack because it had, I think, somewhere around 91% of public support. But Dominic would have none of that support and he would represent forcefully the other 9%.

Some thought that Dominic's tactics in that first year in opposition were over the top and were aggressive. His pursuit of Mike Harris's agenda came only second to his eager pursuit of the media, as they were the ones who would give an audience to his opposition to the government. Back then I thought that he was over the top. But, having thought about it these last eight months, perhaps he was more accurate than even I could have recognized at the time.

As one person who followed Dominic's career observed, he was not a politician who looked for a political legacy in a new highway or a new government building in his constituency. Rather, he did it in other ways, in more direct ways that perhaps not everyone saw or even knew about, as one person discovered going door to door during the recent by-election, when a young disabled girl answered her door. I think the minister of children's

services has already told that story. The girl said, "Oh, Dominic Agostino: When I needed help, he got me a new wheelchair." That wasn't the only story. There are hundreds of stories, if not thousands, whether it was a young child who needed to be on a bus route going to school, whether it was a zoning problem for a non-profit group in Hamilton or whether it was one of thousands of people he served one-on-one.

He will be greatly missed. For those he loved and for those who loved him—Teresa, Andrew, Ralph and Rose, Mary and Tony—and to his nieces and nephews, whom he was so tremendously proud of, our profound sympathies. You can be so proud of his contributions to his community and of his accomplishments to our province.

1430

Ms Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): I'm very honoured to be here on behalf of the New Democratic representatives in the House to talk about Dominic Agostino. I knew Dominic for many years in Hamilton as a very kind, very caring, very effective and very dedicated representative of the people of Hamilton East and of Hamiltonians overall. His name in our city became synonymous with advocacy, with the fight for the underdog. He was passionate and well respected by constituents, yes; by activists, yes; and by politicians of every political stripe in Hamilton as well as here in Toronto.

He cut his political teeth, as was mentioned by the member for Hamilton Mountain, on the school board but also on city council. That's where I got to know him. At the time when he was on city council or on regional council as a chair of social and public health or the social services committee, I was an advocate at a legal clinic for people living in poverty in the east end of Hamilton. I had the occasion many times to talk to him and to the people who worked for him about the issues that were facing people in poverty in the city of Hamilton. He was always there to listen and was always very concerned about what he could do at the local level to try to make it better for people in their everyday lives.

I can recall when he got elected in 1995. At the time, I was still in that position when I was advocating on behalf of tenants. I had the occasion to call Dominic up and ask him for some quotes for a particular document that I was preparing for tenants in Hamilton who were trying to organize against some very nasty changes to legislation that were going to hurt tenants severely. He was there. It didn't take very long for his staff to get him on the phone. I can recall my phone ringing, and it was Dominic and I was shocked. I said, "You called me back," and he said, "Of course. You wanted a quote, didn't you?" I said, "Yes, I did, as a matter of fact. Thank you." I can recall that the thing about him was that, for some strange reason, he became very skilled at encapsulating the very essence of an argument or an issue in a very small phrase that just took off in popularity and the media could just grab on to and it became a headline. I can remember talking to him that particular time, and I think he said, "Tenant rejection act." I was floored and I said, "Did you just think that up on the spot?" He said, "Yeah; is it a

good one?" I said, "It's a very good one, Dominic." Nonetheless, that's what we knew about Dominic in Hamilton. He was always a fighter for the people and always committed to having a strong voice.

On a personal level, although I was from a different political party, Dominic really did encourage me from the day I was elected at city council. Every time he came to city hall and was in the council chambers or around city hall talking to different people, he would always take the time to say hello to me, ask me how I was doing, to ask if there were any questions that I had or any advice that he could provide. He really was a very decent person, and several of his friends became friends of mine.

He was also a controversial figure locally, as people will know. He never did waiver in his fight and his desire to vocalize the things that he was concerned about. He was always very committed to making sure that the things he believed in were well-known and were at the top of the public agenda. The local media loved him. He was known to be quite accessible for quotes from time to time. Once in a while, he would find a way to make a story out of something that other people wouldn't have thought had a story in it. Dominic could always find a way to make sure that something with little fodder became something very major. Often, some of the things that he came up with were quite insightful. He turned them to make people think about how the small things really matter in day-to-day lives of people.

He will be definitely be missed forever and remembered by members of this Legislature, definitely by his family and friends, but also by every single Hamiltonian whose lives he touched, and those were many.

The Speaker: I want to thank all members for their kind remarks. I will ensure that copies of these comments in Hansard will be sent to the family.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Today in the east gallery, I would like to welcome the mayor of Hawkesbury, the county warden of Prescott-Russell, the eastern Ontario warden and the president of AFMO, Jacques Héту.

ORAL QUESTIONS

HEALTH CARE SERVICES

Mrs Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): My question is for the Premier. During the past eight months, you have repeatedly broken your promises to Ontarians. You promised very specifically not to raise taxes, but in your budget you introduced a punishing health tax for those earning over \$20,000. You promised to increase access to health care, but you delisted physiotherapy, chiropractic and eye exams. I ask you today, will you commit that you will not take away any more health

services from Ontarians or delist any more health services?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs): I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak to this once again. First of all, with respect to the premium itself, it's important to put this in some perspective. Some 48% of Ontario seniors will pay nothing; 43% of Ontario tax filers will pay nothing; 37% of Ontario families will pay nothing. We've made it as practical, progressive and responsible as we could.

What was the impetus for this? The member opposite may want to account for this at some point in time. The impetus was a \$5.6-billion hidden deficit. We found out about that after the election. We brought in the Provincial Auditor, and he said, "It's there. You're going to have to do something about it."

We decided that in all the circumstances, given the options before us, instead of cutting water inspectors, teachers, nurses and the like, it would be better for us to invest in health care. We've called upon the people of Ontario, and with them we're going to improve the quality of their care.

Mrs Witmer: Mr Premier, people do not believe you. You had an opportunity to reduce and eliminate the deficit. You hired a private consultant to get that opinion. I would remind you that in a Canadian Press article today you said, "Ontario residents needn't fear that anything else will be dropped any time soon." Then you said, "We'll look at these on an annual basis." What does the quote in the CP article mean? Are you going to be cutting more health care services? Will you be delisting more services? Is this more toward privatization and two-tiered health care?

Hon Mr McGuinty: It's important for the member to cast her mind back, and I think it's helpful to Ontarians as well to understand what the Tories did given their financial circumstances and what we are doing given our financial circumstances. They cut welfare funding by 22% and then froze it; we've increased it by 3%. They fired one third of the Ministry of the Environment staff and cut the budget by 40%; we have hired back water inspectors and meat inspectors. They slashed education funding by some \$400 million; we have committed, over the course of our four-year term, to increase funding by \$2.6 billion to reduce class sizes and have, in each and every one of our elementary schools, lead teachers with expertise in numeracy and literacy. That's their approach; this is our approach. There's the contrast. We're proud of our approach.

Mrs Witmer: How can anybody believe you? Our track record on health is as follows: When Paul Martin cut funding to health care, our government increased funding by \$11 billion. We invested in education—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Stop the shouting. I would like to hear the member from Kitchener-Waterloo.

1440

Mrs Witmer: We increased and supported the Rozanski report in education by \$2 billion. Your Minister

of Education now is causing hardship by holding back the special education funding.

Let me ask you about the Ontario breast cancer screening program. Why have you cut funding for the breast cancer screening program by 10%? They want to increase the number of women who receive the test, yet it's cut by 10%. Why?

Hon Mr McGuinty: We increased that funding by 10% over actual. Those are the facts.

The other thing the former minister may want to recall is that she spent \$400 million on severance packages to fire nurses by the thousands, and then she spent another \$400 million trying to hire those same nurses back. We have a different approach. What we're doing is working together with the Minister of Health and the nursing community throughout the province. Our commitment is to establish 8,000 new full-time nursing positions.

The end game here is to reduce waiting times in our hospitals. In addition to that, we are investing in health care outside of hospitals, whether in nursing homes, whether through family health teams, whether through home care. That is what we are doing with this premium. We understand that it places an additional burden on Ontario families, but I can tell you they are going to get value for their money. We won't be putting it into severance packages.

HEALTH PREMIUMS

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): My question is also for the Premier. Last month you stunned Ontario taxpayers when you broke your promise not to raise taxes. On budget day, you stood outside this place and said it wasn't a tax, but rather, it was a premium, and now your Minister of Finance's bill shows the real truth to this trick.

I want to read the front page of this bill. It says, "The Income Tax Act is amended to impose a tax called the Ontario health premium." This is at complete odds with everything you and your Minister of Finance said. Do you not owe it to the people of Ontario to be honest and admit that this is a black-and-white case where you are raising income taxes on hard-working families in Ontario?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs): If my colleague is looking for the black-and-white case to be made, then this is that: They hid from the people of Ontario a \$5.6-billion deficit. What we could have done is put up our feet for four years and proceeded to make more cuts to health care, to education, to the Ministry of the Environment, and perhaps to cut welfare as well. Given that we bring a very different value set to the job at hand, we decided that it was important for us, instead of cutting, to make absolutely essential investments in health care, education, the Ministry of the Environment, and yes, to give people on welfare an additional 3%, and yes, to give our seniors living in nursing homes a paltry 3% increase in their comfort allowance so they might buy a bit of shampoo

and possibly have enough money to buy a gift, from time to time, for a grandchild. We happen to believe that those are the right things to do.

Mr Baird: Last week, 18 Liberal MPPs were absent from the first major vote on your budget. In fact, you only had 52, the absolute bare majority to pass this bill. Your caucus is clearly feeling the heat. Member after member after member has spoken up about the outrageous content of your first budget.

We've heard your rhetoric about the democratic deficit. Now we read in your budget that you want to collect this tax in nine days, before your bill is even debated and before it's law. Does that not put a sham to the electoral process? Does that not put a sham to the utility of this elected assembly, when we don't even get the opportunity to debate and to vote on a new tax before you start to put your hands in working families' pockets? Isn't that outrageous, Premier?

Hon Mr McGuinty: No, it's not. There is a parliamentary convention, a practice, that allows us to do this.

The member raised the notion that somehow some of our members were absent for the last vote. Well, many of his were absent for the last vote. Am I to make the assumption that they support this bill by virtue of the fact that they were not here?

I can tell you that each and every one of the members of this government is very proud of this budget. In particular, they are proud of the fact that it's going to deliver 36,000 more cardiac procedures, 2,300 more joint replacements, 9,000 more cataract surgeries, 8,000 more full-time nursing positions; close to 100,000 more Ontarian seniors are going to be getting home care delivered to them in their homes. We are very proud of that budget and our ability to put that forward for the people of Ontario.

Mr Baird: If you're so proud of your budget, why don't you do exactly what you promised to do and allow the people of Ontario to have their say in the referendum that you, with great fanfare, promised them? You're breaking your signature election campaign promise. You're breaking faith with hard-working middle-class families across the province. Now, in the ultimate act of arrogance, a slap in the face to the democratic deficit, a slap in the face to all of the people and their elected representatives, you are going to dig your hands into the pockets of hard-working taxpayers before their elected MPPs have the chance to vote.

Will you now stand in your place and will you acknowledge this tax, the lack of progressivity in it, and the underhanded way with which it has been introduced in this place? It deserves to be delayed for three months. Allow public hearings to go on on this bill so the people of Ontario can have a genuine debate about this tax, where you're breaking faith with your election campaign commitments. Will you do that, Premier?

Hon Mr McGuinty: It is more than interesting to be lectured by a member of a previous government which arguably, for the first time in the history of British parliamentary tradition, introduced a budget outside of

this Legislative Assembly, at an auto parts assembly plant.

What we have done is very much in keeping with parliamentary tradition. We have introduced our legislation in this House. We've had lots of debate on second reading and third reading. We had votes in this House. We've been very direct with the people of Ontario when it comes to the importance of moving ahead with these initiatives, not in our short-term political interest but rather in the interest of Ontarians: reducing wait times for them and improving student achievement. We'll keep doing those kinds of things.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): New question.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier.

Despite all the Liberal rhetoric about health care, it is now very clear that you will spend health care money on things that no one in this province considers health care. Whether it's spending on sewer pipe or television ads, there is a \$200-million health care credibility gap in this year's budget, and next year the gap will be \$1 billion. That's \$1 billion that should be spent on health care services that clearly isn't going there.

Will you finally admit to the people of Ontario that first you decided to take \$2 billion from the pockets of working families and then, after the fact, you decided to call it a health care premium so that, you hoped, they would swallow it a little easier?

Hon Mr McGuinty: This is a matter of obsessive interest to the leader of the third party. I'll be pleased to respond once again. Every single penny that is going to be generated by this new health care premium will be invested in new health care services for the people of Ontario. It's a very simple matter.

This year we're going to raise \$1.6 million. The Ministry of Health expenditures are going up by \$2.2 billion. Next year, the premium will generate \$2.4 billion. The Ministry of Health expenditures will be going up by \$2.8 billion. Every single penny generated by the new premium will be invested in health care for Ontarians.

Mr Hampton: I invite you to look at your own budget. Here's the Liberal reality: Despite your promise not to cut health services, you're cutting the health services of chiropractors and optometrists. Despite your statement that you would never impose a regressive and unfair health premium, that's exactly what you're doing. But when you add up the numbers, your increases in health care investments, next year over this year, are actually going to be less than the increases in health care investments under the Conservatives.

That's what your rhetoric about health care boils down to. Admit it. What you did is, you decided you were going to take \$2 billion from the pockets of modest- and middle-income families. Then you thought, "Gee, this will be hard for them to swallow, but if we call it a health care premium, they might swallow it a little easier." That's what you did. Admit it.

1450

Hon Mr McGuinty: The leader of the third party is bringing a very antiquated approach to managing our

health care system and, in particular, our health care expenditures. When I got here 14 years ago, about one third of the budget was consumed by health care expenditures. Today, just under 50 per cent of the budget is being consumed by health care expenditures.

We can no longer afford to measure our success simply by virtue of how much money we're putting into the system when it comes to health care in Ontario. Yes, we are putting more money into the system—obviously not as much money as the member opposite would like. But for the first time, what we're focused on is results. They tell me that 10 per cent of the people in our hospitals shouldn't be there. What we are doing is investing in family health teams, home care, long-term care and public health. We're moving upstream so that we can do more by way of prevention. That's the intelligent, responsible approach to managing health care at the beginning of the 21st century.

Mr Hampton: Premier, no matter how you try to cut the numbers, here's the reality: Between fiscal 2001-02 and fiscal 2002-03, the Conservatives actually increased health care investments by \$1.9 billion. Then, between 2002-03 and 2003-04 they increased it by \$2.1 billion. I remember that when you were over here, you used to castigate the Conservatives for not investing enough in health care. But next year, as compared to this year, you're only going to increase investments by \$600 million.

Why don't you give up all the rhetoric about this being a health care budget and admit this is a regressive and unfair tax and you're simply using the title "health care" to cover it up and hide the fact that this is just a regressive tax grab from the people of Ontario?

Hon Mr McGuinty: The honourable member remains stuck in some kind of time warp where he believes the only thing we can do at any time to improve health care is pour all kinds more money into it. We are making substantial new investments, but, in addition to that, we are determined to get more results. If you talk to the people of Ontario, and particularly families right now who are waiting to access health care, for them it's not about money; it's about the time it's taking them to get health care.

By virtue of these intelligent, strategic investments, we are going to reduce wait times—we're talking specifically about cardiac care, chemotherapy, radiation, hip replacements, knee replacements, cataracts and many other areas. Our investments are designed to do more than just put more money into the system; they're designed to reduce waiting times and make a real difference in the lives of Ontario families.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): My question is to the Premier. Your government's second budget bill today is proof you're still not listening to the people of Ontario. The people don't like your tax grab. They don't like that modest- and middle-income people are paying too much, and they don't like the fact that people making more than \$100,000 are not paying their fair

share. You have had an opportunity to listen over these last many weeks, but you have failed to do so.

My question to you is simple: Why didn't you scrap this unfair tax measure, and why have you reintroduced something that is no more progressive at all today?

Hon Mr McGuinty: We, of course, remain very much committed to our plan to improve health care and our plan to levy the additional funds from the people of Ontario, keeping in mind that 48% of Ontario seniors will pay nothing, 43% of Ontario tax filers will pay nothing and 37% of Ontario families will pay nothing by virtue of this new premium.

Contrast our approach with the approach brought by the NDP through their years in government. They brought in a new tax so that if you earned \$20,000, your taxes went up by \$160. Under our budget, your taxes go up by nothing if you're earning \$20,000. They raised student tuition by 50%. We have frozen student tuition for at least two years. They raised gas taxes by 30%. We haven't raised them by a penny. What we have done instead is that we are taking \$312 million of the revenue we're receiving and transferring that to our municipal partners for them to invest in better public transit. That's the difference between their approach and our approach.

Mr Prue: Mr Premier, you should have spent the last couple of weeks listening to the people of this province and perhaps to some of the members opposite. If you had, you would have realized that large corporations are not paying their fair share. You know, the dedicated health tax which the Peterson Liberals brought in, you have now scrapped. The problem with that dedicated health tax is that there's a loophole: Corporations are not paying \$700 million that they should be paying. If you were really listening to the people, you would have closed that loophole. My question to you again is simple: Why aren't you listening to the people of Ontario? Why didn't you close the employer health tax loophole and save yourself \$700 million?

Hon Mr McGuinty: It's hard to figure out from one day to the next where the NDP stand when it comes to corporate taxation in the province of Ontario, because we gave them the opportunity to vote in keeping with their principal position. We rolled back corporate taxes to the tune of some \$2 billion at least this year. When the NDP were presented with the opportunity to support that legislation, they voted against that bill. So it seems to me that this party has no credibility when it comes to talking about corporate taxes in Ontario.

Mr Prue: When it comes to no credibility, Mr Premier, I think you have the market cornered. You had a chance to listen, but you chose not to. You had a chance to scrap the tax grab for modest- and middle-income people, and you chose not to. You were demanding revenue measures, but you should be demanding revenue measures based on the ability to pay. You should have admitted that your budget, from the outset, was a non-starter. You didn't listen. You didn't change. Therefore, this budget is not based on transparency and fairness. My question is—and I want an answer: Why do you persist going down a road that you cannot possibly win?

Hon Mr McGuinty: I guess the implication in that question is that we're not going to win political popularity by virtue of this budget. I've said this before, and I'm delighted to say it again: This is not about our short-term political popularity; it's about doing what is right for the people of Ontario. Right now, it's time for us to shorten their waiting lists. Right now, it's time for us to reduce class sizes in the early years. Right now, it's time for us to improve student achievement. It's time for us to have more MRIs, more CTs, more surgeries when it comes to cataracts, hip replacements, knee replacements, radiation, chemotherapy and the like. Those are the right things to do for the people of Ontario.

SCHOOL SAFETY

Mr Jim Flaherty (Whitby-Ajax): My question is for the Minister of Education, and it is about promises made, promises broken. Promise number 13, to the Minister of Education, will make sure schools are safe so students can concentrate on learning, and number 22 is to ensure that school boards provide strong local accountability and decision-making. This is about accountability to parents in the public school system.

There's a situation in Barrie where a suspended teacher, according to the *Globe and Mail*, who the children's aid society warned shouldn't be allowed to work with children and had put her on the child abuse register, is volunteering in the schools. Would you agree, Minister, that it is unacceptable for a suspended teacher who, according to the *Globe*, has been placed by the CAS on the child abuse register to be volunteering in the public schools of Ontario?

Hon Gerard Kennedy (Minister of Education): It is the outlook of this government that everyone who comes in contact with children should be screened and should be subject to some kind of sanction or at least oversight by the responsible parties. As a member of the opposition, I put this as an amendment three times in committee to this past government and asked them, indeed, to include volunteers as a formal requirement. Every single time, the government members opposite refused.

I will tell you that in our guidelines to boards there is an initiative in Ontario for voluntary enlistment of these kinds of individuals to use that. I would say that we are in discussions with all the boards around how we can rectify the mistake made by the previous government.

1500

Mr Flaherty: Minister, you are the minister now, and you're responsible for these schools in Ontario. This person was suspended by the Ontario College of Teachers. She was suspended because she wrote something like 64 intimate letters to a 13-year-old boy. She is back volunteering in our public school system. The parents are writing to me, the parents are writing to the newspapers, and they're writing to the school board, saying this is unacceptable. What they get back from the superintendent in the Simcoe County District School Board is that volunteering in schools is a privilege, and that's it.

But how is it that this person can be in this school, can be in the Johnson Street Public School in the county of Simcoe, given the facts of this case? Do something about it. Be accountable to parents in Barrie.

Hon Mr Kennedy: Again, Justice Robins did a report in this province around a very serious issue, and that was the small exposure—the risk that exists in our schools for persons of trust. When it was put to the previous government, when that bill came to this Legislature, they refused to do it. We stand in this House today in a circumstance that the previous government purports to have an interest in but refused and declined to give us the power to exercise.

The member opposite would stand outside his legislative responsibilities and condemn an individual or a circumstance. I can tell you, Mr Speaker, that we will do everything we can with the powers we do have to ensure that all children are safe in this province and that there are guidelines that are followed. I will tell you this, and will serve notice in this House, that we will take the first opportunity we have to make legislative remedy to the job they didn't finish, if they really had that concern in the first place.

HEALTH CARE SERVICES

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I have a question for the Premier. Your delisting of eye tests, physiotherapy and chiropractic services is punishing and shameful to the many Ontarians who depend on these services. It has also been a fatal blow to your credibility as a defender of health care. You have the gall to claim that you're raising taxes to pay for health care services when you're actually spending lots of the money on other things. And your delisting means that not only are people paying much more; they're getting much less.

You've scheduled an emergency cabinet meeting for this afternoon, I hear. Will you use that meeting to cancel the delisting so people get at least some of those vital services back? Will you do that?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): To the Minister of Health.

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I always find it interesting when the honourable member finds a \$2.161-billion increase in funding for the Ministry of Health to be associated with much less. This from a member of a party that, for two or three successive years when in government, what did they do? They froze increases to the Ontario drug benefit, while our budget brings in a full quarter of a billion dollars in new funding for drugs that our seniors are depending on. That is their legacy.

On the matter of physio and optometry, it seems that the honourable member refuses to understand that on the issue of physiotherapy, there is no change in 2004-05, but we will be working to make sure those precious resources that we have for physiotherapy are deployed in an equitable fashion, which is not the case now. Northern Ontario, as an example, is decidedly disadvantaged by the

fact that there are but two schedule 5 clinics and both of those are in Sault Ste Marie. There will be changes to physiotherapy, and they will ensure that the most vulnerable—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms Churley: Back to the Premier. Your credibility has hit rock bottom, and the answer from your health minister just now did not help you any. It's so low that it's actually threatening to bring down a federal Liberal government that everyone thought was unbeatable a few short months ago.

It's going to take a lot more than cancelling the delisting to give people any kind of confidence in you. But let me tell you this: If you don't cancel the delisting, it will show that you're not listening and you must be living on another planet. It will show that you won't even do the minimum for the people who need eye tests, suffer from back pain or need therapy after major surgery.

I'm going to ask you again: Will you use your emergency cabinet meeting this afternoon to bring back those programs for people who need them? Will you do that?

Hon Mr Smitherman: I'm pleased, in supplementary, to have the opportunity to inform the member, because she seems to be continually misinformed, about the work we're doing with respect to optometry in this province. The challenge, of course, in the context of the precious resources we have, is to make sure we deploy them in the most appropriate way. The changes we're making with respect to optometry in this province will mean that those most vulnerable, those who have diseases that affect eyes—our youngest and our oldest—continue to have the benefit of these services.

These investments we're making, including \$600 million for primary care, give us an opportunity to build on our plan, which is decidedly necessary, because when they were the party in government, when they were the custodians of health care in this province, what did they do? They closed medical school spots. They prevented this province and communities all across this province from having the advantage of something they considered pretty essential for health care: a doctor. That's your legacy, and it stands in sharp contrast—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

AIR QUALITY

Mr Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): My question is for the Minister of the Environment. Today marks the beginning of summer, and in Ontario it's synonymous with the beginning of more smog days. We know the health concerns that arise every time there is a smog day advisory: premature deaths, hospital admissions, emergency room visits and sick days. But I understand you made an announcement today at the smog summit that is aimed at addressing Ontario's chronic smog problem. Exactly what is your ministry doing to ensure that we see a reduction in smog days here, as opposed to the steady increase that we've been seeing in the past decade?

Hon Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment): I'm very happy to have this opportunity to clarify for this House the five-point plan that has been introduced by this government, by this Minister of the Environment today.

First, our government is announcing tough new limits on nitrogen oxide and sulphur dioxide. They are primary smog-causing agents. The second component is that we are toughening the limits for nitrogen oxide and sulphur dioxide. The third action plan increases the number of industrial carcinogens and toxins now monitored. We've increased that to 29 elements that we are going to be monitoring. The fourth is that we are going to be using newer modelling. The modelling that's in place at the present time is 30 years old. With improvements in technology, we are going to be using the latest in science to model emissions. And the final point is that we will be implementing new air standards and models, and we are going to implement—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Supplementary.

Mr Berardinetti: Today's announcement is good news for those people who have been forced to stay inside due to asthma conditions, aggravated heart conditions or other breathing problems. It also marks a turning point for Ontario's industries. Setting tough new standards means that industries will need to update their technology. My question is, how will today's announcement affect industry and what is being done to ensure that this plan will not push companies out of business?

Hon Mrs Dombrowsky: The Ministry of the Environment has been working with our industrial partners on this initiative. I'm very happy to point out today as well that Ontario's proposed new and updated air standards are comparable to other jurisdictions, including those in the United States and other provinces, such as Newfoundland, Alberta and British Columbia.

Ontario's current regulatory framework is based on assessing local health and environmental impacts on our communities. Ontario's approach is comprehensive and will require that all pollutants, even the most dangerous ones, will form part of our guideline. This is different than the United States' approach, which focuses on technology-based solutions for specific pollutants.

We are working with our industries. There is flexibility built into our model, and we are confident that both our communities and our industrial sector will benefit from our emissions plan.

MINISTER'S COMMENTS

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): My question today is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services and, once again, it involves one of his comments to the media.

On Friday, in a column by the Toronto Sun's Christina Blizzard entitled "Chief Deserves Better," you said, "There is speculation in the media today about whether Chief Fantino's contract is going to be renewed. That's not my decision. That's the mayor's and the council's

decision. They are the ones who hired him. They are the ones who pay him. He is responsible to them."

I'm shocked that you didn't know that the police services board is responsible for the chief's appointment, not the mayor or the council. With these comments, you have offended Toronto police chief Julian Fantino, you have jeopardized his relationship with the Toronto Police Services Board and you have misled the public. In light of the damage you have done—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order. I'd ask you to withdraw that. It is unparliamentary.

1510

Mr Dunlop: I'll withdraw that he had misinformed the public.

Minister, in light of the damage you have caused, will you stand in the House right now and admit that your comments were ill advised and inaccurate?

Hon Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services): The only person I've offended is that member.

I should tell you that when I was asked the question, the question was that the chief walked out of a meeting at city hall and what was I going to do about it? I said to him at the time, "I have no control over the chief, and when he walks out of a city hall meeting, that's up to the city hall people to discuss, not me, because they're the ones who have responsibility for the chief, for the Toronto Police Services." I would suggest to you, given the incidents that are happening in this community around my ministry, that you would find this the question to ask is really deplorable and really does not even deserve the kind of respect that you should be looking for.

Mr Dunlop: I'm surprised, Minister, that you're taking this question so lightly.

On Friday you received two letters that clearly spell out how your comments were perceived by Julian Fantino and by the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police. They were signed June 18. I have copies of them here, if you want a copy of them. In the first letter, Jerome Wiley, counsel to Chief Fantino, requests that you "publicly and immediately clarify your comments to reflect the legal status of the chief vis-à-vis the mayor and city council."

In the second letter, William Malpass, executive director of the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, asks you "to immediately clarify publicly your views on the role of the police chiefs and to apologize to our member, Chief Julian Fantino, and to police leaders across the province."

Minister, will you make this apology right now in this House?

Hon Mr Kwinter: I would suggest that if the member wants to get a clarification, he should call the chief. He should call Chief Fantino. I have spoken to him. He has no problem whatsoever with what has been said.

If you would only do your research and understand what the role of the police chief is, instead, as I say—I

want to repeat again: There are very serious issues evolving around what is happening in Ontario regarding my ministry. For you to spend your time on that kind of question is beyond you, beyond your caucus, and really is something that you should take a very close look at to see whether or not you're acting responsibly.

PICKERING NUCLEAR GENERATING STATION

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. Ontario Power Generation says it has given your Minister of Energy its recommendation to restart unit 1 of the Pickering A nuclear plant. Last December, your own review panel said the cost of rebuilding Pickering A has ballooned from \$800 million to \$3 billion—in other words, by three and a half times. Now, most reasonable people would say there is something wrong when the cost of a project goes up three and a half times. It's now six months later, Premier. Will you share with us the latest OPG estimate of the cost of bringing back Pickering A before you make any decision?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): The Minister of Energy.

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): The Ontario Clean Air Alliance was provided with all the spreadsheets that were used to do those calculations. Those documents have been available to the public for some time now.

Mr Hampton: Well, when OPG was asked to make all of those numbers public, they refused. You're the government that said you believe in complete transparency and public openness in terms of OPG.

I'm simply asking you, before you throw more money down the drain at Pickering, will you make public to the people of Ontario the latest cost estimates by OPG of what it will cost to bring back unit A? It's a simple question. You say the estimates are available. Well, will you tell us right now? What is the latest estimate from OPG on what it will cost to bring back unit A of Pickering?

Hon Mr Duncan: We did provide the information that was used by the Manley commission in estimating the cost. We have been provided with a number of recommendations. We have the recommendation of the Manley commission and we have the recommendation of the Ontario Clean Air Alliance. We've had the advice of a number of others.

The information will be going to cabinet for a decision. When cabinet has had an opportunity to review all of the information, a decision will be taken with respect to Pickering A, unit 1. At that point in time, of course we will make the information available to the public.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Domestic violence is the scourge of our nation, and it

must be eliminated. The tragic facts are that Ontario has the highest incidence of spousal homicide in Canada. Only 27% of spousal assaults perpetrated against women are reported to the police. These horrific statistics also state that children witness 37% of spousal assaults. Those children who witness violence in a home are more likely to grow up to be perpetrators or victims of violence themselves.

It is a known fact that many youth who suffer from violence and drug-related problems have come from broken homes. On this premise, what is being done to break this vicious cycle and help the most vulnerable members of our community escape such torment and murderous abuse?

Hon Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): I very much appreciate the question from the member. Let me say that this past budget, I was very pleased to see that this ministry was able to secure funding to itemize a very specific public education campaign that deals with breaking the cycle of abuse in a family. As the member rightly mentions in this House, of those children who have been in a home where there has been abuse—if it is male violence—young boys will be more likely to be abusers, and young girls will be more likely to be abused themselves.

This is the kind of cycle that we must address, that we must break. A \$5-million campaign—over the mandate of this government—in public education will focus on very high-risk communities such as the aboriginal community and the francophone community. We are going to deal with young children in teaching them about healthy relationships. I'm pleased to see that this item was included in this budget.

Mr Sergio: An average of 28 spousal homicides occur in Ontario each year. In my riding of York West, on Saturday, June 12, a pregnant woman was shot at by her partner. She was driving to a police station seeking help in an effort to escape an abusive situation. Bullets shattered the windows of the vehicle she was driving.

Here again, this was not the first incident. This woman had endured domestic violence for some time. What is being done by your ministry to help provide immediate shelter and adequate counselling in these horrendous situations?

Hon Ms Pupatello: Unfortunately, what the member is telling us in this House today is true. Most women who do finally flee abuse from their homes have witnessed or suffered violence at least five times before they choose to leave. What we need to do as a government is play our role to see that there is support in communities, so that when they choose to leave, they know they can bring their children with them, and they know they'll get help getting back on their feet.

I am pleased to say that our recent budget has addressed this, providing \$3 million more to support the shelters themselves, which help when women do finally choose to leave these homes. We're also addressing it through \$8 million worth of capital that in this fiscal year

will go to build more shelter beds where we don't have enough.

Again, we mentioned the prevention campaign, but more importantly, for the first time in a very long time, the Ontario government is getting back in the business of second-stage housing. To women who are fleeing, this is a vital service to get women back on their feet.

TRILLIUM FOUNDATION

Mr Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): My question is for the Minister of Culture. Last Thursday, in your absence, I asked the Premier why your government cut \$5.5 million from the Trillium Foundation's budget for this year. The Premier seemed unaware of the cutback and referred it to the finance minister. The finance minister said that the cutback was justified so he could spend more in education and health.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Mr Alvin Curling): Order.
1520

Mr Sterling: Mr Speaker, I suggest members read Hansard for verification.

When I went back and looked at your budget, in fact you got more money this year than you did last year for granting, but for different purposes. Minister, why have you increased funding to the Ontario Arts Council by \$15 million while slashing grants to charities and community projects through the Ontario Trillium Foundation?

Hon Madeleine Meilleur (Minister of Culture, minister responsible for francophone affairs): Indeed my ministry had to look for some money, and we have taken money out of Trillium because the Ontario Trillium Foundation already had money in reserve. This year, the Trillium Foundation and Trillium recipients will not sustain any reductions in their grants.

Mr Sterling: I suggest that the minister go and talk to the people at the Trillium Foundation.

Minister, if you look at the Web site of the Ontario Arts Council, you will see that the largest proportion of recipients is in the city of Toronto. On the other hand, the Ontario Trillium Foundation distributes grants equally to communities across our province based on population. Trillium is an especially important supporter of projects in smaller, less densely populated areas of the province. In my riding of Lanark-Carleton it has supported programs for people with Alzheimer's, cleaning up the Carp River and the establishment of a breakfast program. Why are you taking \$5 million out of the Trillium Foundation to give the Ontario Arts Council a huge 60% increase in their granting budget?

Hon Mrs Meilleur: I recognize that the Ontario Trillium Foundation is a very important foundation. As I explained, we are not going to take any money this year from organizations that are in need. But we all recognize that the Ontario Arts Council is an incubator for our artists and it's very important to invest money. We are going to continue to invest, recognizing that both organizations are very important.

Even if the member from the opposition is saying that most of the money goes to Toronto, that's not exactly right. Each of you will receive a report on what your riding has received with regard to the Ontario Trillium Foundation and the Ontario Arts Council.

The Speaker: New question.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Stop the clock.

I'd like to hear the member from Trinity-Spadina with a new question.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): My question is to the Premier. All over Ontario, drivers are hoping—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order. The Premier is not here; maybe the Acting Premier. Go ahead.

Mr Marchese: All over Ontario, drivers opening their renewal notices are getting whacked with double-digit rate increases, this despite your promise to lower rates by, they say, between 10% and 20%. Here's how your promise is working: Aviva insurance was granted a 10% reduction, but they still hit Harve Sokoloff with a 30% renewal increase. He drives a 1999 Honda Civic CX, has a good driving record and has a policy renewal date of June 23. Premier or others, what do you say to the millions of Ontarians like Mr Sokoloff, who are expecting a 10%, 20% reduction in their premiums but are getting hit with double-digit increases instead?

The Speaker: The Acting Premier.

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I'll refer that question to the minister, who has done a lot to reduce insurance premiums.

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): I would say it adds to the quality of question period when the NDP allows the member from Trinity-Spadina to once in a while ask a question. We love to hear from him. Unfortunately, in this question he's simply on the wrong track. My friend should know that as a result of the initiatives we took—and it was the first step after we were sworn into government—to freeze auto insurance premiums, we brought forth measures through regulation and through the bill that have resulted in an average reduction, including Aviva insurance, of 10%.

My friend knows that you simply can't take one example of one driver who may have had, and may not have told his MPP of, several traffic tickets, who may have had an accident, who may have had problems with his driving record. On average, rates are going down by 10%, and our next series of initiatives is going to have an even further dampening effect on the cost of auto insurance in this province.

Mr Marchese: Minister, your 10%, 20% rate reduction promise, in my humble view, is a sham. Few, if any, Ontario drivers are seeing actual rate reductions, and it's not at all clear that they ever will. Meanwhile, provinces with public auto insurance have seen single-digit rate

increases at the same time that Ontario has seen rates go up 20% to 30% annually. Please, Minister, explain to Mr Sokoloff how your 10%, 20% rate reduction has become a double-digit rate hike. Please explain it to him.

Hon Mr Sorbara: Without any disrespect to my friend from Trinity-Spadina, I would prefer to refer to and rely on the research and analysis on the trend in auto insurance premiums that come in objectively to my ministry. Over the course of the past couple of months, insurance company after insurance company has filed new rates. On average, the decrease is 10.15%. I should tell him that the provinces he referred to—the trend we are seeing is the reduction in accident benefits, so that notwithstanding that they are public auto insurance, they are reducing benefits going to individuals having accidents, and this is the only mechanism that is dampening increases in those provinces. Here we have a system that provides both sufficient benefits and lower insurance premiums.

HERITAGE CONSERVATION

Mr Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): My question is for the Minister of Culture and minister responsible for francophone affairs.

A few days ago you moved second reading of Bill 60, An Act to amend the Ontario Heritage Act. I know that passage of the bill would ensure the preservation of Ontario's irreplaceable heritage for present and future generations, but unfortunately not everyone seems to agree.

Just a few days ago a developer destroyed a 160-year-old pioneer farmhouse in the riding of Mississauga West, which I represent. This is a farmhouse I used to drive by every day on my drive into work. This type of destruction is happening far too often in Ontario.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Will you allow the member to ask his question?

Proceed.

Mr Delaney: How does the ministry prevent the destruction of historical buildings in Ontario?

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur (ministre de la Culture, ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones): Je voudrais remercier le député de Mississauga-Ouest pour cette question.

Yes, it is sad but true that many heritage buildings continue to fall victim to the wrecker's ball. If passed, the proposed amendment to the Ontario Heritage Act would accomplish several goals. Perhaps the most important one is that it would give the province and municipalities the tools they need to stop the demolition of heritage properties. When I was a city councillor in Ottawa, I witnessed too many times the destruction of several heritage sites in my ward and elsewhere in the city. If these amendments are passed, the loss of valuable properties will stop in Ottawa, in my riding of Ottawa-Vanier and elsewhere across the province.

1530

Mr Delaney: Again a question to the Minister of Culture: In Mississauga West, people talk about this type of problem very often. I've had many discussions about the destruction of local heritage buildings with both our mayor and our city councillor. This particular farmhouse was one that stood for many months and that the local citizens petitioned our mayor and our council to try to save. Unfortunately, it wasn't possible to save this particular building; however, it would have been through the Ontario Heritage Act, had it been passed.

Minister, could you please tell me what the reaction to the proposed amendments is and what happens next?

Hon Mrs Meilleur: Since we introduced it for the first reading in April, we have seen a groundswell of public support across the province. For example, Pamela Minns, an influential member of several heritage groups in the Niagara region, is one of those supporters. She agrees that the existing act is weak and outdated and that the proposed amendments would "strengthen our hands at the grassroots where we work to save Ontario's heritage."

The support is not limited to heritage organizations. Sandy Smallwood, a prominent developer in Ottawa, is very much in support. As president of Andrex Holding Ltd, his company specializes in restoring historic buildings. He says, "The package of proposed amendments are a bold initiative that represents a giant step forward in the preservation of Ontario's heritage." We hope that members of this assembly will support this amendment. I hope it will be passed very quickly.

DISTANCE EDUCATION

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): This is a question to the Minister of Education. There's a young student who contacted my office in Jordan, in Niagara, who's enrolled in a distance education program through the Avon Maitland District School Board. Previously, students like him who were enrolled in this distance education simply paid a \$50 deposit that was refundable upon completion of the course. Now he is being whacked with an \$850 fee. The only reason is because he's enrolled at Heritage Christian School, an independent school in Niagara. Minister, will you please investigate this situation and help to correct this inequity?

Hon Gerard Kennedy (Minister of Education): I want to thank the member opposite for bringing it to our attention. He may well be aware that under his previous government, distance education was moved to TVO, away from the Ministry of Education.

I would still undertake, because it involves a school board under our jurisdiction, which he has connected the course to, and there are courses offered by school boards in conjunction with a more provincial program through the distance education office, to look into any changes and how they may impact on the student he has talked about and, he's inferring, on perhaps even a group of students. I would undertake to get back to him as a mem-

ber, and if he or the family involved wants to contact our office, we'll look into that.

I would just give him that notice and advice. It could involve TVO and my colleague the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, depending on exactly what course is taken and when.

Mr Hudak: I appreciate the minister's endeavour to get back to us. He'll be receiving a letter from us immediately, copied to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

I think the point is very clear that a student enrolled in the public system whose parents paid into the local school board would not face an \$850 fee. It would be paid by the host board or by the Avon Maitland board, whereas students of parents who still pay their taxes to the local school board, but simply choose to send their children to an independent school, face this additional fee. I hope the minister will get back to us shortly to make sure we can address this situation in a fair and equitable manner. I appreciate his endeavour in responding to my request.

Hon Mr Kennedy: All I can say more generally is simply that we're trying to be better at the availability of distance education. We have made a commitment to rural schools in this province through our good schools open policy. We want to make sure that the only barrier there for people in our rural areas to get access to a good, high-quality, publicly funded education is because of issues that can't be overcome, because there hasn't been a fulsome rural education policy in this province for some time now.

We are working very hard to make sure that that choice is there and available to each and every resident of rural areas. We've put forward \$31 million, thanks to the Minister of Finance and the Premier, in this most recent budget. We'll address what too many governments have taken for granted, which is that everyone in this province should have equal right to a same-quality, high-quality public education.

We make that commitment to the people in rural Ontario. There are many schools that have been under pressures—many, as the member knows, in his own riding. One of the best schools in the province, with one of the highest scores, was shut down by his previous government. I was there at the time and there were tumbleweeds literally going through there. Recreational facilities can't be used by his community. I'll tell you, our endeavour will be a complete policy of rural education. Distance credits will be there, and so will all of the services that every rural—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): New question.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Mr Minister, yesterday there was a huge referendum in the province of Quebec. The Liberal government of that province has allowed democratic referenda on forced

mergers—the de-amalgamation of many cities. Eighty-nine former municipalities and the people who live in them participated; 15 alone in Montreal voted to return to their former cities and towns.

In Ontario, you have denied that same opportunity to the people of Flamborough, Dundas and Aldershot, and you have refused to respect the vote of the people of Kawartha Lakes.

My question to you is a simple one: When will you grant the same rights to Ontario citizens that people in Quebec enjoy? When are you going to grant the right of those people to control their own destinies?

Hon John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors): I thank the member opposite for the question. As he well knows, we're looking at the Quebec situation with some interest, but our primary responsibility is to make sure that all municipalities are fiscally and financially sustainable and accountable in the province of Ontario. That's our primary responsibility. As we have always said, the prime interests of this government that was elected last October 2 are health care and education issues, to make sure that we improve health care and education in this province. We'll be taking a very close look at the Quebec situation and we will deal with the situation accordingly.

ANNUAL REPORT, OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): I beg to inform the House that I have laid upon the table the 2003-04 annual report of the Ombudsman.

The member for Leeds-Grenville had a point of order.

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leeds-Grenville): Thank you, Mr Speaker. Earlier today there was a request for unanimous consent for second and third reading for the medical review, Bill 104. I'd like to ask for unanimous consent for both Bill 86 and Bill 104 to receive second and third reading today.

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: We are prepared to discuss those things at the House leaders' meeting. The opposition cancelled today's House leaders' meeting. We've rescheduled it for tomorrow. We'd be pleased to talk about it tomorrow.

The Speaker: Do we have consent? There's no consent.

PETITIONS

HEALTH CARE

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): As you know, the Liberals' disastrous budget was passed last Thursday at 9:30. Unfortunately, a lot of people still don't agree with it. On Friday, I had over 1,000 petitions

brought to my office and they are to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Liberal government has announced in their budget that they are delisting key health services such as routine eye exams, chiropractic and physiotherapy services,

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To reverse the delisting of eye exams, chiropractic and physiotherapy services and restore funding for these important and necessary services."

As I mentioned, over 1,000 signatures came in on Friday, and I've signed this.

1540

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and reads as follows:

"Whereas in the interest of true democracy the Minister of Municipal Affairs put the following question to the voters of the city of Kawartha Lakes: 'Are you in favour of a return to the previous municipal model of government with an upper-tier and 16 lower-tier municipalities?'; and

"Whereas the voters, by a clear majority on a provincially mandated ballot, answered in the affirmative;

"The undersigned demand that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario act to respect the will of the people as expressed in a democratic vote, and restore the former municipal structure as stated in the minister's question."

It is signed by about 60 people from the former cities and towns of Kawartha Lakes. I'm in complete agreement and add my signature thereto.

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Ms Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West): I've been asked to present this petition on behalf of about 80 of my constituents.

"To: Legislative Assembly of Ontario ...

"Whereas,

"Elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need;

"Those with reduced ability to pay—including seniors, low-income families and the working poor—will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments;

"Elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

"There was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP

coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province.”

I’m going to table this petition.

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

“Re: support for chiropractic services in Ontario health insurance plan:

“Whereas,

“Elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need;

“Those with reduced ability to pay—including seniors, low-income families and the working poor—will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments;

“Elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

“There was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province.”

I affix my name in full support.

HEALTH CARE SERVICES

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

“Whereas the McGuinty Liberal government is cutting provincial funding for essential health care services like optometry, physiotherapy and chiropractic care;

“Whereas this privatization of health care services will force Ontarians to pay out-of-pocket for essential health care;

“Whereas Ontarians already pay for health care through their taxes and will be forced to pay even more through the government’s new regressive health tax;

“Whereas the Liberals promised during the election that they would not cut or privatize health care services in Ontario;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“We demand the McGuinty Liberal government keep its promises and guarantee adequate provincial funding for critical health services like eye, physiotherapy and chiropractic care.”

This is signed by hundreds of people who live in the riding of Nickel Belt. I agree with them, and I’ve affixed my signature to it.

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Mr Jim Brownell (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): I have a petition.

“To: Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Re: Support for chiropractic services in Ontario health insurance plan:

“Whereas,

“Elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need;

“Those with reduced ability to pay—including seniors, low-income families and the working poor—will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments;

“Elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

“There was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province.”

I submit this on behalf of the constituents.

Mr John O’Toole (Durham): It’s a pleasure to present a petition on behalf of Julia Munro, who’s the member from York North. I extend to her my respect. I hope she’s in good health. On her behalf I am reading.

“To: Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Re support for chiropractic services in Ontario health insurance plan:

“Whereas elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need;

“Those with reduced ability to pay—including seniors, low-income families and the working poor—will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments;

“Elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

“There was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province.”

I’m pleased to sign this and endorse it on behalf of my constituents and those of Julia Munro.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough): "Petitioning the Ontario Legislative Assembly:

"Whereas North Americans (USA and Canada) have become continuously heavier, and overweight persons now make up over 65% of the population; and

"Whereas obesity among children has now been termed an epidemic; and

"Whereas diseases such as diabetes type 2, circulatory disease, knee replacements and some cancers are known to be associated with obesity; and

"Whereas such chronic diseases could be prevented by an active lifestyle and training,

"We, the unsigned citizens of Ontario, request that physical education be reinstated in our schools as a mandatory subject, with an emphasis on training toward lifelong productive skills."

I'll affix my name to it.

TAXATION

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I have literally thousands of signatures here on this petition. It reads as follows:

"Petition to force Premier McGuinty to obey the taxpayer protection law.

"Whereas the McGuinty government's 2004 budget will break the taxpayer protection law by not conducting a referendum on tax increases; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty signed an election pledge on September 11, 2003, not to raise taxes without the explicit consent of voters through a referendum; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty promised in TV ads not to raise taxes by one penny on working families; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty pledged in writing to obey the taxpayer protection law, which requires a referendum before increasing taxes;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To ensure that all of the McGuinty government's tax increases are put before the people of Ontario in a referendum."

I'm pleased to sign this petition as well.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a petition that has been sent to me by Alex Cullen, who is a councillor for the city of Ottawa, Bay ward. It reads as follows:

"Whereas property reassessment occurs now on an annual basis; and

"Whereas higher housing markets increase assessment, leading to higher property taxes; and

"Whereas property values are not related to the cost of municipal services, nor to the ability of taxpayers to pay; and

"Whereas the assessment system is a provincial responsibility;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to initiate a review of Ontario's property assessment system that would lead to reforms that will protect homeowners from excess increases in assessments due to hot housing markets."

I affix my signature to this.

ROUGE VALLEY CENTENARY

Mr Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): I have a petition which I wish to present.

"To the Parliament and Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, MPP Mary Anne Chambers (Scarborough East):

"Whereas Rouge Valley Health System is a two-site hospital consisting of both the Ajax-Pickering hospital in Ajax, Ontario, and the Centenary Health Centre in Scarborough, Ontario (hence known as RVC); and

"Whereas RVC is designated as the regional level 2+ paediatrics, neonatal intensive care unit and obstetrics unit since 1996, and carried official regional status after amalgamation of the two sites in 1997, and achieved recognition from the Hospital for Sick Children and the Child Health Network and funding from companies such as BMO Bank of Montreal and Glaxo Wellcome, who invest in technologies that make the regional centre a state-of-the-art facility; and

"Whereas potential threats to closure, downgrade of regional status or advanced level 2+ services or otherwise affecting 6,400 annual pregnant women, several thousand babies, children and mothers, to the communities of east Scarborough and west Durham, and the unexplained delay of construction on a new wing of the RVC site for family-centred care including the regional departments after extensive community fundraising efforts and the contribution of the provincial government; and

"Whereas the RVC catchment area has expressed full outrage over the delay in construction of the new wing that may result in potential legal action from donors in the community and any threats to the hospital's regional paediatric, NICU, obstetrics centre will force women, mothers and children to travel outside the hospital catchment area to downtown Toronto or Oshawa;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament and Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario, and the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care"—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Thank you. I'm sorry I interrupted you. The member for Erie-Lincoln.

1550

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): I'm pleased to present a petition signed by people across Niagara, including Sharon Kovacs of Port Colborne and Mary Padolyak of Wainfleet, that reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Dalton McGuinty Liberals promised a 'health care system that gives us all the care we need, when we need it'; and

"Whereas chiropractors, optometrists and physiotherapists provide the necessary health care to the people of Ontario to maintain healthy and active lifestyles;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The Dalton McGuinty Liberals should keep their promise to invest in health care and restore funding to cover optometry, physiotherapy and chiropractic care under OHIP."

In support, my signature.

IMMIGRANTS' SKILLS

Mr Kuldip Kular (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Ontario enjoys the continuing benefit of the contributions of men and women who have chosen to leave their country of origin in order to settle in Canada, raise their families, educate their children and pursue their livelihoods and careers; and

"Whereas newcomers to Canada who choose to settle in Ontario find frequent and unnecessary obstacles that prevent skilled tradespeople, professional and managerial talent from practising the professions, trades and occupations for which they have been trained in their country of origin; and

"Whereas Ontario, its businesses, its people and its institutions badly need the professional, managerial and technical skills that many newcomers to Canada have and want to use;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario, through the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities and the other institutions and agencies of and within the government of Ontario, undertake specific and proactive measures to work with the bodies regulating access to Ontario's professions, trades and other occupations in order that newcomers to Canada gain fair, timely and cost-effective access to certification and other measures that facilitate the entry, or re-entry, of skilled workers and professionals trained outside Canada into the Canadian workforce."

I put my signature to this.

DISTRICT OF MUSKOKA

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): Over the weekend I received thousands more petitions to keep Muskoka part of northern Ontario. I shall read it.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the district of Muskoka is currently designated as part of northern Ontario; and

"Whereas the geography and socio-economic conditions of Muskoka are very similar to the rest of northern Ontario; and

"Whereas the median family income in the district of Muskoka is \$10,000 below the provincial average and \$6,000 below the median family income for greater Sudbury; and

"Whereas removing the district of Muskoka from northern Ontario will adversely affect the hard-working people of Muskoka by restricting access to programs and incentives enjoyed by residents of other northern communities; and

"Whereas the residents of Muskoka should not be confused with those who cottage or vacation in the district; and

"Whereas the federal government of Canada recognizes the district of Muskoka as part of the north; and

"Whereas this is a mean-spirited and politically motivated decision on the part of the McGuinty government;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government maintain the current definition of northern Ontario for the purposes of government policy and program delivery."

I support this petition and affix my signature to it.

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I have a petition signed by a number of constituents. It was sent to me by Dr Dario Laurenti and Dr Harold Simon. It says:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario....

"Whereas,

"Elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need;

"Those with reduced ability to pay—including seniors, low-income families and the working poor—will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments;

"Elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

"There was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province."

ORDERS OF THE DAY

INTERIM SUPPLY

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): I move that the Minister of Finance be authorized to pay the salaries of the civil servants and other necessary payments pending the voting of supply for the period commencing July 1, 2004, and ending December 31, 2004, such payments to be charged to the proper appropriation for the 2004-05 fiscal year following the voting of supply.

It's a great honour to be able to begin this interim supply debate. Around this place it's a special debate because as we begin it—it generally happens at the end of the spring session—we know that this House looks to rising for the summer recess. I think it's a good opportunity for us to look back on some of the things that this Parliament has achieved over the course of the spring sitting.

I hope I can, with your indulgence, expand that a little bit, to include what we have achieved in our first eight months of government. Indeed, it was almost exactly eight months ago in this very chamber that Premier McGuinty was sworn in, a cabinet was sworn in and the Liberal government's mandate really began in earnest, following the October 2 election. A great deal has happened over the course of these eight months. I hope I can just point to some of the ones that are highlights for me and some of the things that I think punctuated these first eight months in government.

Before I do that, I want to do a couple of things by way of thank yous. I think that there has been a new mood of co-operation in this Legislature. The previous Parliaments became rather acrimonious, and this Parliament has its acrimony as well, but I think the members of this Parliament have conducted themselves rather effectively and with great integrity moving through the legislative agenda which our government has presented over the course of the past eight months.

I also want to thank my parliamentary assistant, who is sitting right by my side here during these remarks. The member for Eglinton-Lawrence and I joined up as a team over in the Ministry of Finance. He took on a couple of very significant assignments, the first being, notably, automobile insurance. We had made a commitment to bring forward measures that would reduce auto insurance premiums in the province. We had another question on it today, and I was able to say again in this House that our program to bring auto insurance premiums down has been very, very effective. If we have been effective, and I say we have, it's in large measure due to the tireless work of my colleague and parliamentary assistant, the member for Eglinton-Lawrence and my friend, Mike Colle.

I also want to take a moment to thank the hard-working men and women in the Ministry of Finance. The transition from one political party to another, from one government to another, is not an easy thing, even for a

seasoned public service like the Ontario public service. But I want to say publicly, and put on the record, that we have been served with such diligence, energy, imagination and commitment from a public service that certainly welcomed us after the election and assisted us not only in getting established in office but in putting together the measures that I think have punctuated our first eight months in government.

1600

Obviously, I am particularly proud of the budget we presented in this Legislature. I am proud of the fact that we were able, in that budget, to begin a new and stronger era of public policy in Ontario. Yes, there's no doubt that the measures we voted on today, in terms of the bill for the Ontario health premium, have given rise to some controversy. Yes, we said during the election campaign that we would not raise additional revenues. And yes, in this Legislature we have brought forward a bill to raise additional revenues.

I think it's worth saying once again that the financial circumstances we inherited when we took office on October 23 were so critical that it was absolutely necessary for us to bring forward those measures if we were going to fulfill all the other commitments we made during the campaign, notably in the area of a stronger and more sustainable health care system, improvements in public education, strengthening Ontario communities, beginning a program of infrastructure renewal, whether it is in public transit or the electricity system, and giving people the kind of public services that they long for and said they wanted during the course of the 28 days of the election campaign.

As the Premier said earlier in this House today, we could have simply inherited that huge problem and sat back and said that there was no possibility of really doing anything because the province was in serious financial circumstances. The province was in fact in the midst of a debt spiral that threatened our ability to deliver any real standard of service in any of the areas we're responsible for. It threatened our international credit rating. It threatened our ability to service our debt. And it threatened the quality of life of the people of Ontario to the extent that they look to government for high-quality public services.

We simply rejected that and said that this is not about our own political salvation; it's about doing what was right under the circumstances. I've said in this House and in speeches right across Ontario and beyond that it simply would have been unacceptable for us, as we prepared a budget, to allow Ontario to fall into further and further and further debt or, to get ourselves out of debt, to undertake the kind of slashing and burning of public services that would have been required to bring forward a balanced budget within this financial year.

Some of the things we've been able to accomplish in the budget are particularly satisfying to me as a Liberal and as a member of this Parliament from the greater Toronto area. I think, for example, of the assistance we can give seniors who are living on fixed incomes and who said to my colleague from Eglinton-Lawrence and, I think, every member of this Legislature during the

election, "We have problems paying our bills. How are we going to stay in our homes? We live on a fixed income, a fixed pension. Costs are going up. We feel like we're not going to be able to stay in our homes."

What I heard during the election campaign on this matter simply resonated in my head over and over again as we began to prepare the broad schemes of the budget. I said to Mike and I said to others around the table, "We have to make sure that we do something for our seniors. We have to make sure that as we are setting our course on a four-year comprehensive plan to bring Ontario back to financial health, we can't forget about our seniors. We can't forget about the people who worked hard over the course of 30 and 40 and 50 years and now are retiring on pensions and are worried about whether or not they have the resources to simply stay in their homes and live out their remaining years in health and with some sort of confidence that they will be able to maintain simple but comfortable lives."

So we put in the budget a measure that actually represents one of the largest increases, if you work on percentages. Seniors know that those on low and moderate incomes receive a property tax credit of up to \$500 to assist with the paying of property and sales tax credit. We were able to increase the property tax credit by some \$125. That's a 25% increase. I don't want to pretend that that will solve all the problems in the world, but it gives me some satisfaction that in an environment where every single penny we spend had to be justified, in an environment where there was pressure to reduce expenditures so we can get Ontario out of its debt spiral, in an environment where every single ministry was asked to find areas where money could be saved so we could make investments in key areas, in an environment where we have had to take some pretty serious steps, where we have had to delist some services in the area of chiropractic and physiotherapy and optometry, in that kind of environment, this caucus and this cabinet and this Premier were able to say to senior citizens, "We understand your plight, those of who you live on low and fixed incomes, and this budget needs to speak with you." That increase of \$125 a year is going to play a very important role in the lives of thousands and thousands of seniors right across Ontario.

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): Some 683,000 households.

Hon Mr Sorbara: My friend and my parliamentary assistant has got the numbers: 683,000 households will be helped by this measure.

The other matter that gave me some degree of satisfaction along the same line is that we were able, for the first time in 11 years, to increase the benefit that goes to people on disability pensions and those who, for a time, live on social assistance. I will never forget the day in our caucus—and this is not breaching caucus confidentiality, but in our caucus we talked about the fact that we needed to make sure that a Liberal budget spoke to those in Ontario who are most vulnerable.

When I said to my caucus colleagues, "Any budget I present in this Legislature is going to deal with the issue

of those who have had their disability pensions frozen for 11 years and those who have had their social assistance frozen for 11 years," every member of our caucus stood up and applauded, and I really knew that I had the support for that on this score. I was delighted that we were able to include that in the budget.

Just to conclude and have a quick overview of some of the things that have punctuated what we've been able to achieve in these eight months—and you know, there are ups and downs. Some days you feel like, my goodness, you're banging your head against the wall, but I was glad that on the first day we took office, we took steps on the auto insurance premium matter. Finally we see rates starting to come down.

I was delighted that we could, even before the budget, make some critical new investments in the public transit systems of this great city, the TTC. I was delighted when my colleague the Minister of Labour introduced legislation to increase the minimum wage and, down the road, took some steps to deal with the 60-hour workweek that the previous government had put in place.

I was thrilled when the Minister of Energy made announcements in this Legislature that, as they are implemented, will give us once again one of the strongest hydroelectric systems on the entire continent.

1610

I was thrilled when the Minister of Education, in the fall session of Parliament, made some extraordinary allocations for those who are most vulnerable within our school systems.

When my friend the Chair of Management Board introduced legislation in this Parliament to ban forever in this province partisan political advertising, I thought, "Do you know what? These are things we committed to during the campaign, and we're finally achieving them."

The fact that we were able to create, when we were sworn in, a Ministry of Children and Youth Services and that we were able in the budget to allocate some \$25 million to children's mental health, I think, punctuates our first eight months in office.

What can I say about the work that has been done by the Minister of Health over these eight months? This is the most challenging and difficult portfolio of all in government. The demands are huge. Our commitment to public health drives everything we do. The minister has worked tirelessly to help us organize and articulate a plan that will transform forever, and for the better, our system of public health.

When we have completed this first mandate four years down the road, I think we'll look back at these eight months and see how important and how productive the seeds the Minister of Health has planted in health care, the Minister of Education in education and all my colleagues around the cabinet table really were.

In closing, I simply invite my colleagues and members across the aisle to have their say on interim supply. I know and expect that this motion will be carried and we'll be able to pay our bills until we vote the supply motion later on in the parliamentary year.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): Just like families sit down across Ontario, we're going to sit down today and discuss the bill-paying of the government.

When it comes to families, they're finding it more and more difficult. I say enough is enough. Gasoline prices have been escalating at alarming rates, causing the people of Cambridge, North Dumfries, south Kitchener and the rest of Ontario to continually have to hand over more of their hard-earned money at the gasoline pumps. The McGuinty Liberal government has turned its back on this issue.

I've asked the McGuinty Liberal government to take the initiative and immediately freeze gas prices for a temporary period while world prices moderate. I've asked further that the McGuinty government and the Martin Liberal government immediately lower their taxes on gas for a temporary period until world oil prices moderate. I've again asked the McGuinty government to immediately start a royal commission to investigate predatory gas prices charged by oil companies operating in Ontario.

Together with the people of Cambridge, we have collected hundreds of signatures from concerned constituents, asking the McGuinty Liberals to take action. The variable and high gas prices in different areas of Ontario have caused confusion and unfair hardship to hard-working Cambridge families. This is unfair, and the people of Cambridge deserve better. I will continue fighting for the people of Cambridge, North Dumfries and south Kitchener. They deserve better than broken promises, which is all the McGuinty Liberal government has given to the people of Ontario to the present time. Pay more and get less: the McGuinty plan.

In talking about that, we're dealing with the payment of bills. In effect, the McGuinty government is now slashing health care. The budget announced increases in health care spending that were well below what the Progressive Conservative government spent during the last couple of years of their tenure, and yet they still promise shorter waiting lines and thousands more nurses. They don't say how this is going to happen when they're cutting back on health care.

Integrity, honesty and truthfulness are words that have little or no meaning to the McGuinty Liberal government. Their platform revolves around broken promises. The people of Cambridge deserve better than a government that breaks its promises.

Premier McGuinty assured us, as part of his election platform, that he would not raise taxes. However, the Ontario Liberal budget announced on May 18 imposed an increase of income tax ranging from \$300 to \$900 per taxpayer, in addition to a \$3.9-billion electricity hike. The increase in taxes is another jab at the pocketbooks of hard-working citizens and seniors of Ontario.

Many in Cambridge, North Dumfries, south Kitchener and the rest of Ontario will be forced to accept a reduced quality of life due to the Liberal McGuinty government's

delisting of key essential health services. Many people rely upon chiropractic services, eye examinations and physiotherapy to live a healthy lifestyle. For some people, chiropractic treatment and physiotherapy is the difference between walking and being confined to a wheelchair. Shame on you, Dalton McGuinty. The people of Ontario deserve the health services they've come to know. What essential service will a Liberal government axe next? I'm asking the McGuinty Liberal government to reverse the delisting of eye examinations, chiropractic and physiotherapy services and to restore funding for these important and vital services.

Reckless promises of the Liberal McGuinty government have adversely affected the trust between Ontarians and their elected representatives. My office has received many phone calls from the people of Cambridge, North Dumfries and south Kitchener expressing their disgust. They want to know why the Liberal government is breaking its promises in raising their taxes and cutting services. They deserve more from a Liberal government, more than broken promises. Just ask FDR, who promised a chicken in every pot. I can only hope that Dalton McGuinty will promise a polygraph machine in every Liberal office. But that will not be enough for the Premier's office, and I suggest a water fountain full of sodium pentathol be installed. I realize copious quantities of this liquid would be required, but the means justify the end.

The McGuinty government has been ignoring the needs of taxpayers. They're ignoring the health needs of Ontarians by delisting essential services. Instead, the Liberal government has imposed health premiums on already strapped-for-cash citizens.

Premier McGuinty and Minister of Finance Greg Sorbara now have a class action suit launched against them by the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, and rightfully so. They shouldn't be able to get away with breaking their promises and ignoring the people of Ontario. In view of the recent budget of the McGuinty Liberal government, I believe the people's trust in our democracy has been drastically diminished. I have never seen such anger from my constituents, who are asked to pay higher taxes for fewer services, in direct contrast to Mr McGuinty's written and oral promises made before and after the election. These brazen actions were made with the arrogance of a Liberal government which believed that the memory of the electorate is so short that all would be forgotten by the next election, some four years from now. That will not happen.

But in the meantime, what can the electorate do? Unfortunately, very little. I have never believed in a recall vote, but I also underestimated the ambition of those who will do or say anything to win an election. I thought the best of people and was shocked by the lack of integrity that has been illustrated. I have therefore instructed legislative counsel to prepare a preliminary draft of recall legislation that can be used to consult with my constituents over the next few months to determine their wishes. In the alternative, I will be exploring

legislation that would permit citizens to bring a class action against any elected representative for special, exemplary and punitive damages. The grounds for such an action would be a breach of promise or representations that were made negligently or recklessly.

My office has spent a great deal of time dealing with the problem in the registrar general's office. It seems that the citizens of Ontario are having a great deal of difficulty obtaining official documents such as birth certificates. Shortly after the election, Jim Watson, the member for Ottawa West-Nepean, was appointed Minister of Consumer and Business Services, and the registrar general's office came under his jurisdiction. To that time, documentation from the registrar general could be obtained on one day's notice for emergency circumstances and two to three weeks for ordinary delivery. I must say the staff at the registrar general's office was always efficient and helpful. Suddenly, the one-day delivery was stopped by Mr Watson, and ordinary deliveries stretched to months rather than weeks. My constituency office, along with others, was then bombarded with complaints from the public about the time delays, and that still continues.

1620

What happened? Minister Watson stated in this House on a number of occasions that the new delays were due to the funding of the registrar general's office by the previous government, but that explanation does not explain why substantial delays did not happen gradually but in fact suddenly, after Minister Watson took over. Investigation has revealed the real reason for the delays, which the government has been covering up until now. Immediately on taking office, the government initiated a number of security measures regarding requests, including communications with a federal government agency for each request. Yes, Big Brother is watching you. This resulted in increasing the workload of the staff by two to three times and created a tremendous backlog, which we now all suffer from. These security measures were not phased in to lessen the impact; they were imposed without notice. No new staff was hired to meet the workload, no planning was done and the public was not informed about the new procedures. To make matters worse, Minister Watson initiated planning implementation of a new computer system for the registrar's office that compounded the problem.

After creating this great mess, the government too late recognized the problem and in a panic started substantial overtime for staff. In addition, they announced a plan to hire 57 new staff members. A month later, after realizing the number was insufficient to cover the backlog, the government announced a plan to hire over 100 new members—this is planning. But of course the backlog continues, and we can no doubt expect a new announcement hiring even more people in the near future.

This government's negligence has caused grievous harm to many men, women and children in Ontario. Come clean. Can you not at long last tell the public what really happened and take some responsibility for your actions?

The issue of trailer assessment has kept my phone lines busy over the last five months. The government at long last backed down on its decision to tax many travel trailers for 2003 but is still proceeding with a tax for 2004. I've collected hundreds of names of people in my riding alone who are against the new trailer tax. I also started a petition that has been signed by over 750 trailer owners in Cambridge, North Dumfries and Kitchener. These owners are not wealthy people and are hard pressed to pay the new tax in addition to the new health tax and higher insurance and hydro prices.

Things are really improving at Cambridge Memorial Hospital. I like to call it a new beginning. After some confusion and a superintendent being appointed, we now have a new chairman of the board, a new board of directors and a new CEO. I would like to extend special thanks to the 1,200 professionals who care for our seniors and residents of Cambridge, North Dumfries and south Kitchener at Cambridge Memorial Hospital. It is through their constant dedication that health care in Cambridge thrives.

I'm eager for the new wing and redevelopment of Cambridge Memorial Hospital to begin this fall. This project will add 98 new beds to our hospital, emergency services will be increased by 30% and ambulatory care will see an increase of 72%. The expansion will also increase the number of operating rooms from five to seven. Without the commitment of Cambridge Memorial Hospital, the Cambridge Memorial Hospital Foundation and countless volunteers and health care professionals, this expansion would not be possible. Because of the hard work of health care professionals and volunteers in Cambridge, North Dumfries and south Kitchener, we will have shorter waits in emergency, more operating rooms and better ambulatory care. Congratulations and thank you again to all those who help nurse the sick back to health. Because of you, we can be proud of our hospital and our health care community.

I would also like to welcome Mr Lee Gould, who was appointed executive director of the Cambridge Memorial Hospital Foundation in April. Mr Gould brings years of expertise to the foundation. He has held a number of senior positions within philanthropy, including helping to lead fundraising initiatives by the Scarborough Hospital Foundation.

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): This is an interim supply motion and, as such, what the government is attempting to do—if there's anybody out there watching—is to pay its bills. That's all the motion is about. But I anticipate that nobody is going to talk much about the need to pay the bills, they're going to talk about other things, and I of course am not going to be dissuaded from talking about other things as well. I don't know how any of you are going to talk for 38 minutes on the necessity of meeting one's bills for the period July 1 through December of next year. The reality is that interim supply motions are passed by literally every government following a budget in order that the money continues to flow, so that our civil servants can be paid and so that the other

bills a government has can be paid as well. I have no doubt whatsoever that the Liberal majority will pass this and see it into law later this afternoon. The civil servants should all rest assured that come the next payday, there will be some money in their packet.

Having said that, I listened with some interest to the Minister of Finance because he never spent as long on an explanation as I just have on this bill. He talked about other things that the government has done, and I suppose it behooves me to also speak about what the government has and has not done in its eight months.

Of course, for the last couple of weeks we have all been subsumed and consumed by interest on the budget. He has said that his budget is not without controversy. I would put it, I think, a little bit stronger than that: Not only is it not without controversy; it is a budget that has captured the public's imagination in ways I think some of the members opposite wish it had not. It has captured it because the public is angry on two fronts: They are angry because they are being taxed, after having been promised they wouldn't be taxed, particularly in a regressive health tax; and secondly, they're angry because some of the services they have had to rely upon have been delisted in that same health scenario they have used for many years.

Speaking of delisting first, I had an opportunity to be in a home for the aged today. Actually, it was a charitable nursing home run by the United Church of Canada. I was there for the yearly assessment of my mother-in-law, with whom I have power of attorney. While I was waiting for this yearly assessment, one of the physiotherapists came up and started to talk to me. She was speaking some very real home truths. They are very wary and upset in the home for the aged and in the nursing home because they believe that the services they provide to the frail and elderly people who live there—and they are all women in that particular home—are going to suffer as a result of this budget. She asked me whether or not the government had made final determinations as to what constituted a home for the aged, whether or not a nursing home under the Charitable Institutions Act constituted—I told her I could not imagine that they would take away those charitable homes run by various churches, although I didn't know, in fact, whether or not they will include nursing homes that are privately run, but that the devil was in the details, and we're waiting to see that.

She wanted to know what I could do to stop it, and I told her some real truths: The people of Ontario last October elected a government with an overwhelming majority, and that government can use that overwhelming majority to do whatever it wants; the opposition on this side is some 32 people, the government side has 71, and it is often difficult for the opposition to be heard, but that we would continue to speak out on this delisting, we would continue to speak out about the need for physiotherapists to do their jobs in the nursing homes, and we would continue to try to say that those should be expanded, not retracted. They should be for every single person of age who needs them, whether those people live in nursing homes or in charitable institutions, whether

they have home care or whether they are one of the seniors who are lucky enough to remain in their own homes and who will require physiotherapy from time to time to help them remain in those very homes and, by the way, save the government a lot of money.

1630

I talked to her at some great length, but she did not seem to grasp or to understand that with the government bent on delisting services, it will be very difficult to try to get them turned around. I also know that about a half an hour ago there was an emergency meeting of the cabinet. I would hope that the cabinet is upstairs discussing this very delisting. This has been a mistake from the beginning. This is not going to save huge amounts of money for the government, but in fact is making many, many people in this province very anxious about the loss of their service, whether it be for optometrists, whether it be for physiotherapists or whether it be for chiropractors. We have seen, day after day after day in this Legislature, the petitions signed by not one, not two, but hundreds and thousands and tens of thousands of people angry about these delisted services.

We have also seen in these very same times people angry about the health tax, which they believe has been imposed unfairly upon them—a health tax that is not fair to the average person, because it starts taxing them at some \$21,000 of income and has a cap that stops taxing those people who earn huge amounts of money, so that if you earn \$200,000 or \$300,000 or \$500,000 a year in this province, you pay a capped amount of only \$900. People know that is unfair. They know there is money in the system; we are a rich province. They know that after years of the previous government cutting taxes, there are people who are very, very well off and who can afford to pay for these services if we need them; and I would suggest we do.

But this government does not appear to want to listen to any of that. They want to govern, they want to get the interim supply bill passed so that they can pay their bills, but they are not doing in reality what they promised to do just last October. There is a whole litany of broken promises which seems to be added to each and every day. Although there is some admission that some of these have been broken, they continue to stand there and aggravate people who are watching from the outside.

I listened to the minister today say how proud he was of his auto insurance bill. With the greatest of respect, people who have auto insurance continue to see that insurance rise every single day. Every time they open up their auto insurance, they see that the costs are going up; they open up their house insurance, the costs are going up; they open up any kind of insurance at all, they see the costs are going up. Then they open up the newspaper—as I think some of them are wont to do, particularly if they read the financial sections—and they can see that the profits of the insurance companies and the profits of the banks and the profits of the big corporations continue to go up massively: the banks making \$3.1 billion in profit in the first quarter of this year, and the insurance

companies making half a billion dollars in profit in the same period. And they see that what they have to contribute to this budget is absolutely static. In fact, what they are probably going to have to contribute over the long term of some 12 years, as set out in the budget, will actually decline. The people who see this are angry that their auto insurance rates go up while the corporations continue to make more money.

They are also angry because they saw a promise that this government made to cap hydro rates. If anything, I would have to tell you, members opposite, it was not a very good idea to make that promise in the first place, because you could not continue in the long run to sell for 4.3 cents electricity that costs you 5.3 cents. You couldn't do that, but you still made the promise anyway. I don't understand why you made the promise. So I have to tell you, when you broke that promise, I could understand, at least in my head, why you broke that one, because it was unsustainable. But you should never have made it in the first place. I put that one right up there with your promise to the taxpayers federation not to increase taxes. You cannot and you should not be telling people you're going to do those kinds of things if it is your intent to fairly govern this province.

The minister also talked today about some of the other things he was proud of, and I'd just like people to stop and think about them for a few seconds. The first was the minimum wage. Yes, the minimum wage has not gone up for years and years and years, and yes, the minimum wage needed to go up. But look how much the minimum wage is in Ontario today: only \$7.15. A person who goes out to work for \$7.15 per hour in this, the richest province in one of the richest countries of the world, and who works a 40-hour week, at the end of the month will have about \$1,100 in take-home pay. If that person lives in a city like Toronto or Hamilton or Ottawa or Windsor or Thunder Bay, he or she will see almost all of that money eaten up simply on the cost of a one-bedroom apartment. In the city of Toronto, the average cost of a one-bedroom apartment, we all know, is running around \$900 a month at this point, which leaves scant money, almost nothing. By the time you've paid your small amount of taxes, it leaves nothing for food, clothing or transportation. That's what people are expected to live on at minimum wage.

In upping it that small amount, we have ensured that anyone who works for minimum wage and who works a 40- or even a 50-hour workweek will live in poverty. For us to say and for him to say that that is a good thing—I think he should re-look at those words. Yes, any amount of money would be welcomed by people who are that poor, but the reality is that \$7.15 is not a living wage. They could have, and should have, done much more. Their promise is to raise the minimum wage to \$8 over the lifetime of this government. I will tell you that many of those poor people cannot wait that period of time. They cannot wait for the full four years to get to \$8 an hour. They have to speed up the minimum wage. They have to do it to help to eradicate poverty. It's not going to have any deleterious effect on the businesses in this

province any more so than it did in the United States. Many of the states increased their minimum wage, to many of the same clarion calls that all the poor businesses were going to go bankrupt. But it was soon realized that it did not happen. What did happen is that those same people who had just that little bit, that modicum of increase in their life standards were able to spend their money on the necessities of life and actually saw their own living standards increase. It was a good thing in the United States, where it was done, and it could be a good thing here. We have to revisit, and you as a government should have revisited, the snail's pace at which you're getting to \$8. In fact, you should get there very soon.

I looked at the other things the minister had to say he was most proud of, and that is increasing social assistance rates by some 3%. That, to me, said a lot. Some eight years ago, in 1995, the first act of the Conservative government under Mike Harris was to slash by 21% the money for those on social assistance, to slash that money to women and children, because most of the people who are on social assistance are women and children, to slash it so they no longer had enough money to live and in many cases didn't have enough money to eat, and certainly to ensure that they lived in poverty to a far greater extent than one could possibly imagine. Those rates were slashed and they remained slashed for all of those eight years. In spite of inflation, which was some 13% over those eight years, nary a penny went to those people.

When you ask, "Is it a good thing that someone gets a 3% increase in their social assistance rates?" I will not tell you it's a bad thing, but is it enough? Is it enough that an able-bodied person get \$530 a month plus 3%, which is another \$16? What is that going to do to that person? Is it going to help? Of course it's going to help. How it's going to help is that they will have to go to the food bank one less time in a month. That's what it's going to do. That's all it's going to do. Could you have done more? Yes, you could have. Should you have done more? Absolutely, you should have. It is not enough to give them a 3% rate increase when inflation is at about 2% and expect that they are going to continue in a situation like they are in now.

That same thing is visited by those people on Ontario disability support payments. They got a 3% rate increase, and even though the top rate there is \$930 for a single person, a 3% rate to them only meant some \$28 or \$29 a month, and that is twice that they maybe won't have to go to the food bank. Their lives have not appreciably changed under this Liberal government, any more than they changed under the previous Conservative government.

1640

We as a society cannot accept that that is enough. You, as Liberals and as a government, should not accept it as enough either. The Minister of Finance should not stand up and say he's proud of that. He should stand up and say he's sorry for that, sorry that that's all he could or would do with the resources he had. But he should never say he's proud of it.

He also talked about getting back in the housing game—that we were getting back in supportive housing—and so did some other people today during question period. The reality is that we're not. This budget did not allow social housing any kind of money at all. There is some \$13 million in new money, but that is not even sufficient to match what the federal government has given to Ontario: some \$500-million-plus to build housing. We are lagging way behind. We have 75,000 families in the city of Toronto alone who are waiting for socially assisted housing, and probably will not get it.

We have advocated in our party many, many times that one of the great determinants, one of the great equalizers, one of the great opportunities that a government has is to build housing for people who need it. If you come to our city—people who may be watching on the TV—if you come to the city of Toronto, or to Hamilton, Ottawa or any large city and sometimes even just large towns, you will see people who are really down on their luck. You will see people who are homeless. You will see people who have nowhere to go. Housing is the first determinant in making them well. We know that if people have housing, then their psychiatric problems can be reduced. We know that if they have housing, it is easier to find work; it is easier to keep oneself clean; it is even easier to go and apply for government programs, because you have to have an address. That housing is the first determinant. If you can have that, all of the other problems can be reduced, and reduced substantially.

We think that money should be spent, and we think that the budget is woefully inadequate in terms of supportive housing. We think it is particularly woefully inadequate for those people who have psychiatric and other needs, whose housing needs must be met immediately. We will continue to advocate on that behalf.

Back to interim supply until I close: This is a bill—there are many, many things wrong, but we, as an opposition, will continue to tell the government with each and every opportunity we have in this Legislature. In the meantime, I can understand what the bill is for, and I can understand the need to vote on that bill this afternoon. The government needs the money, and I think the money will be forthcoming. I can only hope and pray and wish that once this money starts to flow, as it surely will, that the civil servants are paid, that the other government programs are paid, this government will pay far more attention to the social side of the Legislature, increases the social insurance rates, build some more housing, increase the minimum wage and start doing those kinds of activities which will build a more prosperous Ontario.

Certainly the government knows that the last eight years have been brutal to many Ontarians, and certainly this government should be doing its utmost to make lives better for those same people.

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I'm pleased to be able to speak to this particular motion today. This is one of those motions that characterizes the British parliamentary system. This is one of the motions

that said to the king, "You know, you can't spend the money unless Parliament agrees to it." So it has been a way of holding the crown accountable for literally centuries.

Therefore, it is one of the most fundamentally important debates we have. Sometimes we see it as routine. Sometimes we see it as even mundane. But, essentially, it is one of the most important debates that ever occurs in the British parliamentary democracies. That is important.

It is also important for really fundamental reasons. It's how our schoolteachers get paid. It's how our civil servants get paid. It's how the bills of the province in general get paid. If we do not pass this motion before this Legislature rises, the bills won't get paid. I look around: our clerks won't be paid, the pages won't be paid. So we really need to pass this motion today. I'm looking over at my friend—I won't say who. He's going to get paid too if we do this. It's one of the few measures that the clerks at the table and the other officers of this Legislature are truly all in favour of. It is a unanimous sort of thing.

Having said that, I think it is also an opportunity for people to speak about some of the things that are going on in the province that are important in their constituencies. I want to tell you that one of the things that is really important in my constituency, and I suspect—I know—across the entire province, is the commitment to long-term care that the Minister of Health, Mr Smitherman, and the Premier of the province, Mr McGuinty, have made in the budget that we are now considering, or we have just finished considering some of its measures; \$191 million of operating funds is flowing immediately into that sector.

Do you know what that means? It means that people in long-term-care facilities will see an increase in staff of 2,000 people in the sector. There will be about 600 nurses and 1,400 personal support workers, dieticians etc. That will make a real difference to the people who call our nursing homes home—it really will. They will now be entitled to two baths a week. It doesn't seem like a lot, but when you were restricted to getting only one bath a week in an institution—think about that. When I went out to the nursing home in Gore Bay following the budget to talk about it, that was one of the things the residents, their families, the staff and the administration found to be really important in their day-to-day lives.

The day after the budget I was in Manitouwadge. It is a beautiful town north of Lake Superior. It's a mining town. It's a town that has seen prosperity slowly moving away as the mines down at the corner slowly start to close down. They were excited about the opportunities in the budget for their children. Teachers were there; the principal of the elementary school was there. They believed this could deliver opportunity for Manitouwadge and for their children, and they were most pleased.

They were especially pleased, though, with the initiatives in northern development. You would know, Mr Speaker, that the government is investing \$135 million in the heritage fund, an increase of \$35 million. We have a new program, called grow bonds, which will provide new

investment capital to business people who want to grow their business, who want to start a business and need capital. This will create opportunity and jobs. The GO North program is a \$10-million program to attract major employers to the north to provide anchors in the various centres across northern Ontario to provide the kinds of jobs we have been looking for and that we need. They're also interested in the \$285 million we are committing to northern highways. That was the input I was receiving in Manitouwadge the day after the budget. It was important; it was significant.

With that, I have exhausted my time; I see my whip making some signals to that effect. I will be taking my seat, but I urge all members to support this motion for interim supply.

1650

Mr John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): It's a pleasure to be up again in this House, speaking to the interim supply motion. In the last few weeks we have been doing a lot of debate on the budget and the damage that budget is doing to working families and seniors throughout the province of Ontario. We might touch a little bit on that today, but there are a number of other things I want to talk about as well.

I want to talk about some of the things that have happened in the last couple of weeks that have been good news stories. I want to talk about the school visits I have enjoyed here at Queen's Park in the last couple of weeks. I've had eight schools come to visit from my riding in the last couple of weeks, and I've been pleased to meet with them and give them a bit of a tour and assist the wonderful staff here at Queen's Park who also do school tours. It's too bad we can't have a little longer tour for those schools. I will read off a list of them here.

Today, my last school was here, A.J. Charbonneau Public School from Arnprior. Through the last few weeks we've had Horton Public School from RR 1 Renfrew, McNab Public School from Arnprior, Cobden District Public School from Cobden, St Thomas the Apostle Catholic school from Renfrew, Walter Zadow Public School from Arnprior, Admaston Township Public School from RR 2 Renfrew, and the Beachburg Public School. In all those schools they take civics now and learn a little bit about government and how it works, the different levels of government. I'm very pleased, as their member, to be able to assist them with these tours of the Legislature.

Last week I had the pleasure of being present for the fire marshal's awards at the Royal York. Of the 15 recipients of the awards, two of them came from my riding and I do want to talk about them a little bit. The first one, a safety partner award, was the television station, the New RO, which headquarters in Pembroke. They did a series of commercials in Renfrew county dealing with the dangers associated with smoking and drinking with regard to fire. They asked any fire department to piggyback in a campaign that gave them access to \$195,000 worth of advertising for a cost of \$1,000. They are going to do the same thing next year as well. It

gave fire departments in our area a tremendous opportunity to get their message out about fire safety. That's so important to ensure that lives are not lost unnecessarily due to fire.

I also had a young boy here, 10-year-old Cody Videto. Cody arrived home from school one day and noticed that there was smoke rising from his home. He opened the garage door and saw a lot of smoke. He immediately closed the door, ran to a neighbour's house and called 911. The fire department was there tout de suite and was able to minimize that damage, so the smoke damage has been corrected in their home and they're back living in it. But it was the quick thinking and action of this 10-year-old boy under those kind of pressured circumstances to make all the right decisions, to act in the way he did, that thereby saved the family home. I was pleased that Minister Kwinter was there for the awards last week, as well as Fire Marshal Bernard Moyle. I was certainly pleased and honoured to be there as well.

So those are some of the things that have been going on in my riding. On Saturday night my wife and I were able to attend the 53rd charter night for the Pembroke-Petawawa Lions Club. We attend a lot of charter nights for different clubs. This one was special because they were honouring Aiden Russelle, a young child, two-and-a-half years old, who has some significant health issues. He can't eat properly; he can't chew. There are going to be some major, major operations done on him. He's been down to Cincinnati and that is where they'll be done. Lowell Green, the wonderful radio host in Ottawa, found out about the plight of this family—Aiden and his parents, Stewart and Kelly—and said, "We've got to do something about this." With the Lions Club in Petawawa, he devoted one three-hour show to raising money for Aiden. In one three-hour show, he was able to raise over \$120,000, somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$125,000, as a matter of fact. Lowell Green was the guest speaker at that banquet as well.

It's just an illustration of what can be accomplished when people get together and work for each other and show their compassion and caring for someone in need. That is something rural people are well known for. I don't exclude urban people from that. It's just that in rural Ontario, your neighbours are generally someone you know and genuinely care about.

So that's a few of the things. We also want to talk about some of those things that are bothersome up in my riding of Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, and the McGuinty budget is one that is bothering them a lot. We still haven't stopped the fight on trying to get this government to rethink this decision, this terrible decision, this wrongful decision, this punitive decision, to delist chiropractic services, physiotherapy and eye examinations for many people. That will hurt people in my riding disproportionately, people in my riding and in the riding of my colleague from Haliburton-Victoria-Brock and in the riding of my colleague from Parry Sound-Muskoka, who incidentally has taken a double whammy, probably a triple whammy, in this budget because of the

punitive way his riding has been treated. But we'll let the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka deal with that issue as he sees fit.

That's one of the things, and this is on top of the many things that have happened since I was elected as a member: the decision by this government to break promise after promise such as unfreezing hydro rates, their failure to act as they said they would with regard to auto insurance, many different things that are hurting individuals and will continue to hurt them as the true impact of this budget is known and felt over the ensuing months.

I know we're talking about interim supply. The government needs this bill passed because it's got to pay some bills. One thing people will find is that nobody can spend it like—it's a toss-up as to who spends it faster, a drunken sailor or a Liberal government. And this government will be liberal in the future. You'll see that that's the way they love to operate: They love to take your money and they love to spend it. It must make them feel good to spend money, so they take more than is necessary, more than we can possibly afford. That's one of the earmarks of a Liberal government: They will take every little thing they can get from you, and if they think there's a penny left in your pocket they'll dive right in and get that too, and then they'll spend it wherever they see fit, not necessarily where the priorities of the province or the people should be focused but where they see fit.

You know, they've got a bear wise program. They're going to spend \$900,000 on bear wise programs in Ontario, and that is not going to do anything to solve the problem of bears in my riding and other rural ridings, again like that of my colleague from Haliburton-Victoria-Brock, and I'm sure my colleague on the other side, the honourable member from Peterborough, has some of those same problems in the north end of his riding as well. The government has definitely missed the mark with that policy. I really am hoping that we don't have—but we're already seeing problems. We're seeing livestock being killed, we're seeing people who have been attacked by bears. What's the next incident we could see? I don't even want to say it. We all know what it could be. I don't even want to think about it, let alone say it. I'm hoping that somehow this summer does not turn out to be a disastrous one for berry crops, which will exacerbate the problems greatly. I hope that in the late summer and early fall of this year, we don't have some real, severe problems because of the failure of this minister to do what he should have done, and that is to convince the rest of these members over there that the reinstatement of the spring bear hunt was the right thing to do.

700

Another issue is of course regulation 170/03, which is having disastrous effects on people in rural Ontario. I know the government hides behind the cloak of saying it was the previous government that introduced the legislation. We know that. But I will say that every single Liberal in the House at that time voted in favour of Bill 95, which encompasses regulation 170/03.

The proof of the pudding is in the eating, and now what we're finding in this regulation is that there are a lot of problems in there. I am hopeful that the Minister of the Environment, in granting this six-month so-called moratorium on implementation, will find many ways to change this legislation, eliminate parts of it, because it is a tremendous overreaction that will not accomplish the utopian goal of perfection, because perfection cannot be achieved, certainly not by any Liberal government. So we'll not reach that point, but we will reach the breaking point for many businesses. Many campsites have already closed in my riding. They have shut down permanently. They are not reopening. Children's camps are considering it. Some have been given extensions, thankfully, and I appreciate the work of some of the people in the ministry who have worked with us to give those extensions for some reasons. But if at the end of those extensions changes aren't made, we're going to see a significant change in the economy of rural Ontario. Our ability to service and attract tourists is going to be compromised greatly because these businesses are going to be shut down. Some of them are community halls and public places of meeting and so on and so forth. So we have some great concerns about that with regard to the effect of 170/03.

Let's get back to the health care issue. That is one I have received more complaints and more mail on than any other issue since I've been here. This decision by the government needs to be reversed, must be reversed.

I'm getting signals from my colleagues, Mr Speaker. Apparently I have used up more than my allotted amount of time, which is easy to do in this House sometimes because it is so nice to be talking to the members on the other side that we just get carried away sometimes and go beyond our limits. So I'm going to pass this on to my colleague.

Mrs Donna H. Cansfield (Etobicoke Centre): I rise in support of the interim supply motion. The reason we need to pass this motion is that obviously it is necessary, as was identified earlier, in that you have to pay the bills. It's not just quite like a family sitting down and making a determination. We in fact support all those families that at one time or another sit down and make the determination on the use of their resources and how they do pay their bills.

I guess the question is, why do we need to bother to do this? Obviously, the main reasons are our health care and our education, supporting those critical parts of the government's responsibilities and obligations in the non-scheduled payment area. We actually can go forward and pay our debts and we can pay some special purpose accounts, but in fact we can't at this time pay our employees. So this is particularly important for us as we move forward.

We have intended to put \$600 million into long-term health care. We need to move forward on that front. Certainly in my area, Etobicoke Centre, we have the Ukrainian Canadian Care Centre that is in desperate need of some additions and renovations in order to support its

community, the Dom Lipa centre that looks after the Serbo-Croatian community, and the Etobicoke seniors' residence, just to name a few, and my community is really no different than any other community. We all recognize the need for each of us to be able to support those communities as we move forward with our seniors.

A lot of people make a little about the fact that they are going to get two baths a week. But if you think about the fact that many of us who have been parents bathe our children every day, it's almost criminal to think that our seniors only did receive one bath a week. This is particularly important as they get older and maybe do not have the continence they had before. Two baths a week can make a significant difference in their lifestyle and how they care.

Another critical part of why we need to do this has obviously to do with our education system. Our schools are falling down. The previous government didn't do one report, they did two, to determine that. We have sustained that and our schools are in great disrepair. In my area in particular, Nativity of Our Lord, which was in fact promised a school by the previous member from Etobicoke Centre—something I don't think he really had the authority to do. But in fact nothing has happened. I have another school, Father Serra, which was built for 300 children. It has over 600 children. You have to look at the health and safety of those children, who have one bathroom for the girls and one for the boys. I mean, certainly these are the areas right across this province where we need to reinvest in the infrastructure. If we don't pass the motion, obviously, the interim supply, then we can't go forward on the issues we need to deal with. Does this make any difference to some people? Maybe not; it certainly does to me, and it certainly does to my community. I think it's a pivotal part of our vision of where we want to go for Ontario, a reinvestment in health care.

Interestingly enough, a lot of people make comments about the issues around eye care, for example—the routine eye examination that will not occur for those over the age of 20 and under 65—but they neglect to say that all medical eye care in fact will be available for anyone for whom it is medically required. That somehow seems to get lost in the conversation. They also neglect to say, in the case of chiropractic, that the maximum amount that any individual could have was \$150 per year. For us to go forward and make the reinvestment that we've made, for example, with \$600 million toward immunization for children, for catastrophic issues such as meningitis and pneumonia, we can make a significant difference in their life and in their future.

That's not to say that the other issues are not important. It's like most things in government: You make decisions, and you base those decisions on your priorities. So for us, those decisions have been made. We need to move forward, we need to be transparent, we need to be open and we need to be able to say to the folks, "This is our four-year plan, not our one-year plan. This is where we're going to invest this year and next year, where we've made our decisions."

Another good example is around the issue of water. When you look at the amount of money that we put into health care for this year, we've actually exceeded the amount, and if there's anybody, actually, in this Legislature who thinks that you cannot get hepatitis from dirty water and that's not a health issue, or the fact that our children are suffering from obesity and that is not a health issue, because in fact it leads to diabetes, then I'm quite surprised they would suggest that those are poor investments.

Prevention is the cornerstone of any good health system. It's absolutely imperative that we look forward, instead of spending the money on the illnesses, to prevent them in the first place. That's again part of the long-term care, as well as looking at our family units—150 of them to put across this province. So for us, move on. Get the motion passed. It's time to pay our bills, and it's time to move forward with a vision for Ontario.

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leeds-Grenville): I appreciate the opportunity to talk on this supply motion. I know the implications of the motion were explained earlier, so I won't get into that.

I would like to touch on a few things related to the actions of the Liberal government since their election last year, and one of the things, of course, we've heard over and over again from the government during debates and in question period is this question of a deficit that they inherited. They've used a number of \$5.6 billion, which we dispute, but in any event, it's out there. Our former finance minister, Ms Janet Ecker, had indicated that certainly there were risks associated with the budget that we tabled in May. When you take a look at two incidences of SARS, the blackout, the Iraq war, the impact on the economy, I think those were realistic, but we were committed and had a plan to meet those challenges, and we would have.

It's interesting to listen to the Liberal rhetoric surrounding this issue. When I hark back to 1990—Mr Speaker, I don't believe you were here then in the run-up period to the 1990 election. I can't recall whether you were or not, but if you recall the budget tabled in the spring of 1990 by the then Liberal government, they were saying, "We have a \$50-million surplus." That was barely a balanced budget. So, of course, as we know, the NDP came into power, and lo and behold, they opened the books and said, "No, we're facing a deficit in excess of \$3 billion." The NDP, under Mr Rae, devised a strategy that I think was their ultimate downfall. Whether it was through the decision of the Minister of Finance, Mr Laughren, or Mr Rae, or whoever the powers were behind the throne, they decided in their lack of wisdom to try and spend their way out of that deficit to boost the economy. Of course, as we all know, the deficit that first year of the Rae government was in excess of \$10 billion and continued to grow and grow. They doubled the debt of the province in just five short years in office.

1710

Now we've had a different situation where a government comes in, is facing a fiscal challenge, and instead of trying to spend their way out of it, theoretically, they

have said, "We'll spend into it." That's essentially what they've done and have come up with a very significant deficit rather than attempting to meet the challenge. If they could not have met the challenge, I think the people of Ontario would have understood. There was a whole range of options, but they've opted otherwise. As a result, it has built on the reputation they developed in the very first few weeks of their government of breaking promises and solemn commitments made to the voters of Ontario during last year's election campaign.

We now have the Premier of the province, Mr McGuinty, described by some as the 9% man. That's his standing in terms of trust with the people of Ontario. Only 9% of the people of this province believe in and trust the Premier of Ontario, Mr McGuinty. That is unprecedented. We've heard pollsters say they have never seen a leader of a province in single digits. This is someone who in eight months in office has developed that kind of reputation, and I believe has had the impact that the first budget of the NDP had on that party. It branded them; it was something they could never escape from.

Unlike the thinking of the great minds behind this in the Premier's office and the Liberal Party, who feel, "We can do this to the people of Ontario, we can break those solemn promises, but the public of Ontario will forget all about this. Three and a half years from now when we go to the polls, they will forget that we broke promises"—cornerstone promises with respect to tax increases, with respect to a referendum if they felt a tax increase was necessary. "We'll forget about auto insurance, the commitments we made; we'll forget about the hydro rate freeze commitment we made; we'll forget about the promises we made surrounding consultation on major pieces of legislation; and we'll forget about the promises we made for more teachers, more nurses or more police officers." In effect, what they're saying is, "We think the voters of this province are dumb, in capital letters, that they're going to forget about this series, this litany, of broken promises." They've already developed the code words "promise breakers," we've heard "Fiberals" and we've heard language that is even stronger than that and is unparliamentary, so I will not use it in this House.

One of the most serious offences or affronts to the people of Ontario, the people who placed their trust in the Liberal Party in the last election, is the delisting of essential services: chiropractic, optometry and physiotherapy. When we talk about optometry: "This is not necessary; it's not critically important, and if it's medically necessary it'll be referred to the appropriate discipline and be covered." But there was an incident recently with the passing of Ray Charles, who was blind from the age of seven from a minor problem, apparently, and if it had been caught at an early stage by an optometrist, Mr Charles may not have been plagued with a life of blindness. There are very serious incidents that could be caught early by optometrists and be sight-saving diagnoses which now may not occur because of the shortsightedness of the Liberal government.

I have very limited time. Others wish to speak. Hopefully I'll have another opportunity—and I'm sure I will—over the next three years to remind Ontarians of the failings of this government, their breaking of promises and, most importantly, their breaking the trust with the people who elected them just eight short months ago.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): The member from Leeds-Grenville leads me to make quite a number of comments connected to his party. I want to be as kind as I possibly can. It will be difficult, but I will do my best.

You will recall that the Tories had a good economy for approximately eight years while they were in power. They claim the economy was good because they were there. The federal Liberals claim the economy was good because they were there. Presumably two distinct ideologies on some economic approaches, you might think, but they both take credit for this great economic recovery of the last eight years. So who's right?

Interjection: The Liberals are.

Mr Marchese: The Liberals will say they're right. Tories say, "No, it was Mike Harris. He started it." But they're not paying attention, so we'll give you the credit for having done a good job federally, for creating all that wonderful prosperity in Canada.

Just as a reminder about the Tory economic legacy, because they're so proud of themselves, they cut income taxes in the order, cumulatively, of about 16 billion bucks. Now, if you're a banker—and most of you Liberals are not, but some of you may have been—if you're a bank president, not just an ordinary worker in the bank, and you're earning \$1.5 million just in salary alone—God bless, just in salary, not to talk about bonuses and all the other perks you get, because the perks are good—that individual, male or female, woman or man, would get, under the Conservative regime, approximately \$120,000 back.

The wealthy Ontarians really deserved that kind of economic break, because when you're only making \$1.5 million, it's not enough, you understand. It's simply not enough, because the fridge or the stove have just got to go. You've got to replace it every couple of seconds. If you're a banker, it's not good enough to hold it for seven years; you've just got to replace it every other day. So for the banker types—I use bankers as an illustration, to make a point. They did well under the Tory economic policies, where the money you receive back is good for you. The people making 30,000, 40,000, 50,000, 60,000 bucks didn't get much back, they didn't do very well under the Tory economic legacy, but if you were wealthy, you did well.

I remind you that the federal Liberals introduced about \$100 billion of income tax cuts at the federal level. They claim they had to do that, presumably—not to imitate Tories, mind you. No, no. Again, I say to you, the people who enjoyed the benefits of the income tax cuts were not the little guys. If you're a banker, you get a whole heap of money to buy new fridges, new stoves, new boats, however many you want, by the days or the weeks and so

on. So I wanted to remind people that it isn't just Tories who love to give income tax cuts; the federal Liberals did as well, a couple of years ago, in the order of \$100 billion. Liberals don't want to talk about it, but I thought I would remind you.

I remind you that the reason they may have done it was to keep the Tories, the former Alliance Party, at bay, because the only issue the Alliance had was cutting taxes. It's still one of their major planks: "You've got to keep on cutting taxes," as if what the Liberals did wasn't enough. But the reason the Liberals did it, some of us argue, is partly because they are very much like the Conservative Party—at least half of you are; the other half are a little more progressive—and the other part is really to keep the Tories, the Alliance, at bay. Once you take the policy of cutting taxes away from the Alliance, the Conservative Party, they've got nothing else, or at least very little.

1720

Mrs Liz Sandals (Guelph-Wellington): Except going to war.

Mr Marchese: That's another issue.

I remind you, good listeners that you are, and those of you who follow this political channel—it's 5:20—that the Tories left a deficit in a good economy. Some people might appreciate, possibly accept and understand that in a recessionary period you might lose a couple of billion dollars along the way. It's hard. If you don't have money coming in because people are not working and a whole lot of money is going out, it's tough. The NDP in 1990 could have done what the Tories did, and that was to lay off 15,000 to 20,000 workers in a good economy. We could have, in a bad economy, fired another 20,000 people because we didn't have the money. We could have done that. But we didn't do it.

The Tories left a deficit—and let's not quibble about \$5.6 billion or \$5 billion—in the order, legitimately, of \$4 billion or \$4.5 billion to close to \$5 billion; not a risk, but a deficit. I've got to tell you, your Gerry Phillips, who said that the Tories would have a \$5-billion risk, was dead on, spot on. Except if you say to Gerry Phillips that he predicted a deficit, he gets incensed. He hates it. He doesn't want to be the person who, prior to the election last October, could be so prescient on economic matters that he predicted a deficit of \$5 billion. He doesn't want to be known as that person to have foreseen the deficit. He doesn't want to let the public know that the Liberals knew there was a deficit, because that's how they could adjust the broken promises. I want to get to the broken promises in a few seconds, just as a final reminder that the Tories left us a deficit in a good economy. God bless their souls.

Now I want to come to the Liberals. The Liberals now claim they didn't know about the deficit. At least three months ago, the Premier claimed he didn't know. About two weeks ago, he claimed that he did know about \$2 billion.

Interjections.

Mr Marchese: They're all saying they knew all the time there was a \$2-billion deficit. That's good. That's a

good start. But I remind you that the old Liberals who were here, the old-timers—not you new ones and not the rump, with all due respect—knew that the deficit was in the order of \$2 billion to \$5 billion. Our leader predicted a \$4-billion deficit. The Fraser Institute predicted a \$4-billion deficit. If Liberals didn't have a clue, or they were clueless, about the deficit and claim that they only knew about \$2 billion, that there was no way of predicting any more than that, then I say to you: What kind of politicians are you? What kind of political la-la land are you living in that you, those of you who have years of political experience, didn't have a sense that the deficit was more than \$2 billion?

Why do I say this? Contextually, I say this so that when the Liberals made their promises—you've got to put it into the deficit context, you understand. So if you have a \$4-billion deficit, the experienced ones would know that it is \$4 billion.

Interjections.

Mr Marchese: Work with me. If you—

The Deputy Speaker: Excuse me. If the member from Trinity-Spadina travels too far, he'll be out of his place.

Mr Marchese: I am more or less in this area. At least I don't waffle as far as the Liberals do, because the Liberals can waffle on the right and the left with great liberty.

If we have a \$4-billion deficit, how could the Liberals—the experienced ones; forget the new ones—promise \$7 billion of new services?

Follow this; it's not too complicated. Remember the \$4-billion deficit? Let's assume that some of you knew that. You're not going to increase taxes. Do you follow? No new taxes, \$7 billion more in services, you've got to deal with the deficit and then you sign a taxpayers' pledge that says "no new taxes," and you're going to balance the budget. It can't be done. It just can't be done. Whomever you consulted—economists—who said this could be done are wrong, the advisers are wrong, the political party is wrong and all the Liberals are wrong.

I'm telling you that I told them before the election that they were fundamentally mistaken, wrong and manipulating the facts, because you were. I'm sorry. You know that, Speaker. I said in many debates, "You cannot do this; it can't be done." There is not enough money—new money—to deal with new services because of no new taxes, and you've got to deal with the deficit. I'm saying to you, you can't do it, and nobody listened to the NDP before that.

We made a promise to raise money, and we said we would take it from those individuals who were the biggest beneficiaries of the income tax cut: those whose incomes were over \$100,000 or \$150,000. People don't like to hear those things. They don't want to be taxed. They want to hear Liberal politics that say, "Don't worry. We can, through this strange Liberal alchemy, produce greater services, no cuts, no taxes and balance the budget." Only liberals could promise those things and get away with it. It just fascinates me how you do it.

New Democrats have to fight it out all the time. It's like we've got to put our fingers in that brick and just climb ever so slowly and hope the people are listening to what we've got to say. Liberals can go out, say whatever they like and get elected. God bless, I'm telling you. You guys have help up there. We don't, but you guys have a whole lot of help. The help has to be divine, because it's not humanly possible to do what you said you would. There's got to be divine intervention, and I hope at some point that the Trinity up there is going to be a little fair to us. Someone's got to be a little fair to the NDP.

Mr David Oraziatti (Sault Ste Marie): Trinity-Spadina.

Mr Marchese: Well, they're fair in Trinity-Spadina. Part of the Trinity worked in Trinity-Spadina. But you've got to be a little fair to New Democrats, generally speaking, across Ontario. It looks good federally, I've got to tell you. It looks very good.

Here's the other worry I've got. I want to tell you, contextually, the promise the Tories left us, and then I want to tell you how hurtful your promises have been to so many, because they're not going to forget you. The public simply will not forget you. With all due respect and in total disagreement with what Harris did—in spite of all my disagreements with him—a whole lot of people respected the man for keeping his promises. You will be remembered by many in Ontario, particularly in the next election, for having broken your promises, and that's something you've got to live with.

In the meantime, you should crow out there about this great budget. You guys have got to get out there. I'm telling you, not enough people are seeing you. So many of you are so proud of this budget that you've got to go and defend it. So eloquent are you and so competent are you at getting those nuggets out of that budget. Just get them out. There are nuggets in there. You've got to pull them out. Take it out to your ridings and show them that the opposition is wrong; that you were right and we're wrong. You've got another week to do this before the federal election, to help your federal cousins. You've got to take the effort, the time, and just go and help out.

1730

I've got to tell you, I'm worried about something. There are 12 to 15 ministries that are going to be flatlined. The Minister of Finance makes no bones about it. He's very clear; he's very translucent about this. They will be flatlined, they admit, and they're defending this out there. Some ministries are going to have reductions. Speaker, you know what it's been like to have suffered under the cuts under the Conservative government. All of our constituencies were profoundly worried about our inability to get back some of the services we lost. So here we are, a Liberal budget saying that 12 ministries, possibly 15, will have their budgets flatlined, meaning no increases, and some will have to suffer greater reductions. They're saying, "That's right. That's what you've got to do." If we had problems under the Tories in terms of all the cuts they made in all of the ministries, imagine having the Liberals now admitting and defending flatlining and greater cuts.

Mr John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex): You have to deal with reality.

Mr Marchese: As John says, what are you going to do? You've got to deal with the reality, and the reality is, we need to raise additional monies so that the province has dollars to deal with the problems the Tories left us. They're saying, "No, we can't tax any more."

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: John back there is saying, "We've got to balance things out." I am saying that this balancing means that we are going to have greater service reduction, and I believe strongly that the province can't deal with that. It cannot deal with that.

Imagine Comsoc, Sandra Pupatello's ministry, possibly having to sustain cuts or at least flatlining. Imagine what that ministry does: They deal with very vulnerable people, and without her support to deal with all of the people, the constituents she deals with who are very vulnerable indeed, what are we going to do?

What should the Liberals do? The Liberals have to reflect on how it is that we need to find new money. The way they did it was to introduce a health levy that is not progressive. You will have Sorbara, McGuinty and others standing up saying, "Our health care tax levy is progressive." In the beginning, anyone earning \$20,000 plus one cent was going to have to pay 300 bucks. When they realized that the lack of progressivity of that move was so egregiously disproportionate, they had to change it. Now they proudly say, "Ah, someone earning \$20,000 will only have to pay 60 bucks, and if you're earning \$21,000 and over, you pay \$120," and so on. So if you are earning 200,000 bucks, you pay only 900 bucks.

Mr Wilkinson: Plus \$8,450 of surtax.

Mr Marchese: If you're earning 40,000 or 45,000 bucks, you pay \$500.

Mr Wilkinson: And no surtax.

Mr Marchese: Imagine. If you are someone, such as a banker, earning \$1 million, you pay no more than 900 bucks. This poor Liberal is defending the fact—he says, "That poor banker has to pay the surtax, so he's already paying." That poor banker, earning \$1.5 million, has to pay the surtax, amounting to what—a couple of thousand? I don't know. He's saying, that's OK.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: They're both saying that's OK, and I am arguing it's not.

Liberals are no different in their ability to discriminate against low-income individuals than the Tories. They are no different. What they're doing is profoundly unfair, and if you don't accept it, ask the Liberals to give you the charts. People with low and middle incomes are getting whacked by the Liberal Party, and people who earn anything over \$100,000 or \$200,000 are doing just fine. They are as comfortable under the Liberals as the Tories. God bless the Liberals. They still defend it as a progressive tax levy; I say it's not. I say the delisting of chiropractors, physiotherapy and optometry was a dumb political move, and you will pay.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It is my pleasure to rise today and speak on the interim supply motion, which all

speakers have said is basically a routine motion to pay the bills. It's really an important question for the people of Ontario, because we've just finished the time-allocated budget and seen taxes go up and service levels go down.

As you might know, it is very hard to follow the member from Trinity-Spadina. He's so entertaining and so engaging because he brings to bear a couple of points which I think are right on track. I'm reading from page 24 of the budget. It says, "Ontarians' priorities...."

"Between 2004-05 and 2007-08, we will restrict program spending to an average growth rate of just 1.9 per cent a year."

We know that the growth in the economy and the growth in demand outpaces that level—no question. It says: "Over the same period, the budgets of 15 ministries are either being flatlined or decreased."

There's another signal in here that the public sector workers should be aware of: "Gerry Phillips, the Chair of Management Board, will begin the process of finding further savings and efficiencies across all our ministries. He has clear targets"—that's code language for reducing the payroll—" \$200 million in 2005-06; \$400 million in 2006-07; and \$750 million in 2007-08."

The budget process will "eliminate several tax expenditures coming out of" the review of efficiency measures. It goes on to say, "We are raising certain fees and charges across a range of services to ensure that they better reflect the true cost of delivering those services," ie, your driver's insurance, your driver's licence, will all increase by as much as 50%.

If I was to review some of the history, I would suggest that it is important to note the ministries that are important to my riding of Durham. One of them is the agriculture ministry. Agriculture and food is being reduced from \$677 million in 2003-04 to \$549 million—less money. The Board of Internal Economy is going down from \$204 million to \$149 million. The Ministry of Culture—they all rave about how important this priority is—is going down from \$294 million to \$277 million. Just scanning down the page here, the native affairs secretariat has gone from \$16 million to \$14 million; natural resources is going from \$518 million to \$505 million; northern development is going from \$79 million to \$73 million; tourism and recreation from \$213 million to \$184 million.

Those are just a few comments. What we heard during the very limited, time-allocated pre-budget hearings was the outrage of the people of Ontario on two fundamental issues. Basically it was the delisting of health services that Ontarians have traditionally been provided—chiropractic, optometry and physiotherapy; they are now private. As well, they've added a tax on health care.

If you read a very good article today, which I'm quoting—it's from the Toronto Star, June 21, and it's called "Plugging Holes in Health Spending." Ian Urquhart, who is a long-time correspondent here at Queen's Park, is talking about the total revenue the province is going to collect in the new tax for the remainder of this fiscal year: \$1.635 billion. There is also a total of

\$725 million coming in this year from the federal government. This comes to a total of \$2.36 billion of new money. However, what has happened is that they're not increasing funding to health care by the amount of the tax and the amount the federal government is bringing to the province of Ontario. In fact, they're only spending \$2.1 billion when the revenue is \$2.3 billion. There is a \$200-million hole in the health budget. I can say to you that this hole is going to become much larger.

The Liberals, of course, deny that this is how it happened. They just magically found this matching number. The Liberals in this province have promised 230 different commitments and failed to deliver on any of them. This budget is one more example, and the time allocation they introduced. They aren't listening. They're privatizing health care—

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate.

1740

Mr Colle: Mr Speaker, just talking today about appropriations of this government, we went across this province in pre-budget consultations with our committee on finance and economic development. You were part of that. In communities like Timmins, beautiful Thunder Bay, Kitchener-Waterloo, Peterborough, all these wonderful communities, we heard the people of Ontario saying, loud and clear, over and over again, "We want an Ontario government that is going to concentrate on the basics. We want an Ontario government that is going to fix our health care system, fix our schools, fix our cities and get down to basics." That's what we heard in all those communities. Even in Timmins it was the same message. Whether it's the budget or appropriations or estimates, we are trying to do that.

It's amazing; originally I remember, when we came back to the House after the election, the opposition was screaming about education: "You're not putting enough money in education. There are problems in education." We haven't heard one comment about education, because in our budget we have put exactly what Rozanski asked for in our public schools. That's why they don't ask questions about education on that side.

Remember when they used to say, "Keep your promise about putting money into the municipalities. Stop the downloading. Make sure you pass on some of the gas tax revenues"? You don't hear questions about gas tax revenues. You don't hear questions about downloading over there because we've stopped that. We've said to the municipalities, "If we download, we're going to increase taxes," which the other government did. That's why we've uploaded public health; 75% is now going to be provincially funded. It's not fair to download things on to municipalities because that means it's downloaded on to property taxpayers.

We've also said that for the first time in the history of this province, a provincial government is going to give a portion of the gas tax to municipalities, to improve our air, to make our cities and our towns work better. We're going to give money for public transit and infrastructure. Whether it be Ottawa, K-W or Toronto, they're going to get money, for the first time in history.

Not one question or comment from the NDP about the gas tax promise we kept, not one question about education, not one question about downloading, because they want to change the subject. Now they want to talk about so-called delisting. They don't want to talk about the other promises we made.

We said we were committed to stopping the unnecessary wait times for people who needed chemotherapy. We had the calls at our office; mothers, daughters, sons, grandfathers, waiting for a year to get a hip replacement, waiting for a year to get some kind of cardiac procedure. They couldn't get a family doctor. That's the shameful legacy of the NDP and the Conservatives. They didn't pay attention to primary care reform. We're about primary care reform in this budget. We're going to put in family health teams to take care of that family health care gap which exists right across this province. They never talk about that. Sure, we had to make tough decisions about chiropractors, but our decision is to make sure people get that cardiac surgery when they need it, the chemotherapy when they need it, that they actually get home care. You never hear them say anything about home care—not one word mentioned by the NDP or the Tories about home care.

This is an unprecedented investment in health care that's on the street first, not in the hospital first. That's what we've said. But they believe in the old, tired status quo of just writing cheques to the hospitals. You can write cheques to the hospitals till the cows come home, but you've got to transform health care.

Our job is to explain to the people of Ontario that almost half our budget is now going toward health care. If we don't start to transform health care to meet the needs of the future, we are not going to be able to have enough money to pay, never mind for health care, for anything else. It's an imperative we have. It's a paradigm shift. The member for Trinity-Spadina agrees with the paradigm shift, and I know that.

Let's not talk about what happened in the past. Let's go ahead with investing in this paradigm shift. We know the Conservatives are never going to agree with a paradigm shift. We know that. But our NDP socialist brothers, they believe in paradigm shifts. That's why I thought they would support our home care initiatives, our public health initiatives. Dr Sheela Basrur is going to lead that charge in public health. It was downloaded by the Conservatives on to municipalities. We're saying that was wrong. We need leaders like Sheela Basrur to put attention on public health because it's about prevention; it's about immunization. We haven't heard one good word from the opposition party about immunizing children—not one good word. We are going to be world leaders in immunization of children.

I've got a six-month old granddaughter. I will tell you, I'm sure happy that she'll be able to get immunization—but not only for my granddaughter, who might be able to afford it through her parents; I'm worried about the kids who live in small towns all over northern Ontario, in small communities, whose parents cannot afford the 675

bucks for a needle so their kids won't get meningitis or chicken pox. Chicken pox can be with you for the rest of your life. It's called shingles, which can be devastating. So we're saying that we're one of the first provinces that is going to have this preventive investment strategy in transforming health care, not cheque-writing health care.

We are writing cheques too. As you know, this year alone we're increasing the health care budget by about \$2.2 billion, with a big "B." And they're complaining that there's some kind of gap there. Where's the \$2.2 billion going? It's going into our health care system, of which a component part is our nurses. I remember the Conservatives—I sat in this House on the other side, where our good friend from Muskoka is, and I remember Mike Harris sitting right here. I asked him, "Do you want to apologize for saying that you don't need nurses any more, that they're like Hula Hoop workers?"

He stood up in the House and said, "No, I'm not apologizing," and sat down.

I asked him again: "I'll give you another chance. Maybe you didn't think about it before you fired all those nurses and said they weren't necessary in our communities, that it was a mistake for you to say they were like Hula Hoop workers and they were obsolete."

He stood up again and said, "No," and sat down again.

This budget recognizes that nurses are not only employees; they are an integral part of the multidisciplinary team in a hospital. Whether it be the orderly, the nurse, the doctor or the engineer in that hospital, that nurse is on the front line. We found too many of our nurses were taking off sick because they never had assistance in lifting heavy patients.

In fact, they came to my office on Friday. Nurses from the TGH said, "The last government didn't pay attention to us. Too many of us are off sick. Thank God you're finally giving us assistive devices to lift heavy patients. Thank God you finally recognize that nurses are an integral part of our health care system and not just an afterthought."

You will never hear the opposition talk about the fact that we have given seniors in this province a 25% increase in their property tax credit for tenants or homeowners. Some 685,000 senior households will get up to \$625 per household to help defray some of their costs. That's an increase of \$85 million in this budget. I haven't heard one member on the other side say that that was a good idea—\$85 million every year to give seniors a bit more of a break so they can stay in their homes. And it's not just about that \$85 million. We're also giving them \$400 million more in home care. So if they want to stay in that house, they can get that home care and then also be able to live in dignity in their home or apartment.

Those are the good things in this budget. It's about children in our schools who have been neglected for too many years. It's about our municipalities and our city services that have been downloaded. We're starting to fix that. This is a step toward transformation. It's a step toward a paradigm shift. It's not just about writing cheques on yesterday's promises, as other governments

did. If you look at this document carefully, at our expenditures, our investments, over the next year, you will see investment in nurses, investment in public health, investment in seniors. And it's not just about fixing problems; it's trying to avoid future problems so there will be health care for future seniors, so there will be children who won't be stricken with chicken pox or meningitis. I know the opposition doesn't mention these things, but they have to be there as part of the overall fair assessment of what we're doing.

By far, we're saying that it is not an attempt to say that we are perfect, but that we are doing what we were sent here to do: to fix the basics, fix the health care system—that includes nurses and home care; fix the schools—that includes caretakers and teachers; fix the cities—that includes public transit, which the other government said wasn't important any more. So it's about new priorities of transformation, about a paradigm shift to the future.

The Deputy Speaker: The time for debate has expired.

It's now time to recognize that Mr Sorbara has moved government notice of motion 164. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1751 to 1801.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr Sorbara has moved government notice of motion number 164.

All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Fonseca, Peter	Patten, Richard
Bartolucci, Rick	Gerretsen, John	Peters, Steve
Bentley, Christopher	Gravelle, Michael	Phillips, Gerry
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Jeffrey, Linda	Pupatello, Sandra
Bountrogianni, Marie	Kennedy, Gerard	Qaadri, Shafiq
Bradley, James J.	Kular, Kuldip	Racco, Mario G.
Broten, Laurel C.	Kwinter, Monte	Ramal, Khalil
Brown, Michael A.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Ramsay, David
Brownell, Jim	Leal, Jeff	Rinaldi, Lou
Cansfield, Donna H.	Levac, Dave	Sandals, Liz
Caplan, David	Marsales, Judy	Sergio, Mario
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Matthews, Deborah	Smitherman, George
Colle, Mike	Mauro, Bill	Sorbara, Greg
Cordiano, Joseph	McMeekin, Ted	Takhar, Harinder S.
Delaney, Bob	McNeely, Phil	Watson, Jim
Di Cocco, Caroline	Meilleur, Madeleine	Wilkinson, John
Dombrowsky, Leona	Milloy, John	Wong, Tony C.
Duguid, Brad	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Duncan, Dwight	Oraziotti, David	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Parsons, Ernie	

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Martiniuk, Gerry	Scott, Laurie
Barrett, Toby	Miller, Norm	Tascona, Joseph N.
Bisson, Gilles	Murdoch, Bill	Witmer, Elizabeth
Dunlop, Garfield	O'Toole, John	Yakubski, John
Kormos, Peter	Ouellette, Jerry J.	
Marchese, Rosario	Runciman, Robert W.	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 58; the nays are 16.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

It being past 6 of the clock, this House is adjourned until 1:30 of the clock on Tuesday, June 22.

The House adjourned at 1804.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon / L'hon James K. Bartleman

Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Alvin Curling

Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers

Deputy Clerk / Sous-greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks at the Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Algoma-Manitoulin	Brown, Michael A. (L)	Hamilton East / Hamilton-Est	Horwith, Andrea (ND)
Ancaster-Dundas- Flamborough-Aldershot	McMeekin, Ted (L)	Hamilton Mountain	Bountrogianni, Hon / L'hon Marie (L) Minister of Children and Youth Services. Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse, ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford	Tascona, Joseph N. (PC) First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative Prue, Michael (ND)	Hamilton West / Hamilton-Ouest	Marsales, Judy (L)
Beaches-East York / Beaches-York-Est		Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington	Dombrowsky, Hon / L'hon Leona (L) Minister of the Environment / ministre de l'Environnement
Bramalea-Gore-Malton- Springdale	Kular, Kuldip (L)	Huron-Bruce	Mitchell, Carol (L)
Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Jeffrey, Linda (L)	Kenora-Rainy River	Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Brampton West-Mississauga / Brampton-Ouest-Mississauga	Dhillon, Vic (L)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Gerretsen, Hon / L'hon John (L) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement, ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Brant	Levac, Dave (L)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Milloy, John (L)
Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Kitchener-Waterloo	Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)
Burlington	Jackson, Cameron (PC)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	Van Bommel, Maria (L)
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Lanark-Carleton	Sterling, Norman W. (PC)
Chatham-Kent Essex	Hoy, Pat (L)	Leeds-Grenville	Runciman, Robert W. (PC)
Davenport	Ruprecht, Tony (L)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Matthews, Deborah (L)
Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Caplan, Hon / L'hon David (L) Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal. Deputy House Leader / ministre du Renouvellement de l'infrastructure publique, leader parlementaire adjoint Wynne, Kathleen O. (L)	London West / London-Ouest	Bentley, Hon / L'hon Christopher (L) Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail
Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest		London-Fanshawe	Ramal, Khalil (L)
Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey	Eves, Ernie (PC) Leader of the opposition / chef de l'opposition O'Toole, John (PC)	Markham	Wong, Tony C. (L)
Durham	Colle, Mike (L)	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga-Centre	Takhar, Hon / L'hon Harinder S. (L) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports
Eglinton-Lawrence		Mississauga East / Mississauga-Est	Fonseca, Peter (L)
Elgin-Middlesex-London	Peters, Hon / L'hon Steve (L) Minister of Agriculture and Food / ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation Hudak, Tim (PC)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Peterson, Tim (L)
Erie-Lincoln		Mississauga West / Mississauga-Ouest	Delaney, Bob (L)
Essex	Crozier, Bruce (L) Deputy Speaker, Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Vice-Président, Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative Cansfield, Donna H. (L)	Nepean-Carleton	Baird, John R. (PC)
Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre		Niagara Centre / Niagara-Centre	Kormos, Peter (ND)
Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Qaadri, Shafiq (L)	Niagara Falls	Craiton, Kim (L)
Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Broten, Laurel C. (L)	Nickel Belt	Martel, Shelley (ND)
Glengarry-Prescott-Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Nipissing	Smith, Monique M. (L)
Guelph-Wellington	Sandals, Liz (L)	Northumberland	Rinaldi, Lou (L)
Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant	Barrett, Toby (PC)	Oak Ridges	Klees, Frank (PC)
Haliburton-Victoria-Brock	Scott, Laurie (PC)		
Halton	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)		

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Oakville	Flynn, Kevin Daniel (L)	Stoney Creek	Mossop, Jennifer F. (L)
Oshawa	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Stormont-Dundas- Charlottenburgh	Brownell, Jim (L)
Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Patten, Richard (L)	Sudbury	Bartolucci, Hon / L'hon Rick (L) Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	McGuinty, Hon / L'hon Dalton (L) Premier and President of the Executive Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif, ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales	Thornhill	Racco, Mario G. (L)
Ottawa West-Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest-Nepean	Watson, Hon / L'hon Jim (L) Minister of Consumer and Business Services / ministre des Services aux consommateurs et aux entreprises	Thunder Bay-Atikokan	Mauro, Bill (L)
Ottawa-Orléans	McNeely, Phil (L)	Thunder Bay-Superior	Gravelle, Michael (L)
Ottawa-Vanier	Meilleur, Hon / L'hon Madeleine (L) Minister of Culture, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre de la Culture, ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones	North / Thunder Bay-Superior- Nord	
Oxford	Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Timiskaming-Cochrane	Ramsay, Hon / L'hon David (L) Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles
Parkdale-High Park	Kennedy, Hon / L'hon Gerard (L) Minister of Education / ministre de l'Éducation	Timmins-James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	Bisson, Gilles (ND)
Parry Sound-Muskoka	Miller, Norm (PC)	Toronto Centre-Rosedale / Toronto-Centre-Rosedale	Smitherman, Hon / L'hon George (L) Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Perth-Middlesex	Wilkinson, John (L)	Toronto-Danforth	Churley, Marilyn (ND)
Peterborough	Leal, Jeff (L)	Trinity-Spadina	Marchese, Rosario (ND)
Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge	Arthurs, Wayne (L)	Vaughan-King-Aurora	Sorbara, Hon / L'hon Greg (L) Minister of Finance / ministre des Finances
Prince Edward-Hastings	Parsons, Ernie (L)	Waterloo-Wellington	Arnott, Ted (PC) First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	Yakubski, John (PC)	Whitby-Ajax	Flaherty, Jim (PC)
Sarnia-Lambton	Di Cocco, Caroline (L)	Willowdale	Zimmer, David (L)
Sault Ste Marie	Oraziotti, David (L)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Pupatello, Hon / L'hon Sandra (L) Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Duguid, Brad (L)	Windsor-St Clair	Duncan, Hon / L'hon Dwight (L) Minister of Energy, Chair of Cabinet, Government House Leader / ministre de l'Énergie, président du Conseil des ministres, leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Scarborough East / Scarborough-Est	Chambers, Hon / L'hon Mary Anne V. (L) Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités	York Centre / York-Centre	Kwinter, Hon / L'hon Monte (L) Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	Berardinetti, Lorenzo (L)	York North / York-Nord	Munro, Julia (PC)
Scarborough-Agincourt	Phillips, Hon / L'hon Gerry (L) Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement	York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston	Cordiano, Hon / L'hon Joseph (L) Minister of Economic Development and Trade / ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Scarborough-Rouge River	Curling, Hon / L'hon Alvin (L) Speaker / Président	York West / York-Ouest	Sergio, Mario (L)
Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Dunlop, Garfield (PC)		
Simcoe-Grey	Wilson, Jim (PC)		
St Catharines	Bradley, Hon / L'hon James J. (L) Minister of Tourism and Recreation / ministre du Tourisme et des Loisirs		
St Paul's	Bryant, Hon / L'hon Michael (L) Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones, ministre responsable du Renouveau démocratique		

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Lundi 21 juin 2004

PREMIÈRE LECTURE

Loi de 2004 sur la révision provisoire des paiements d'honoraires de médecins, projet de loi 104, <i>M. Smitherman</i>	
Adoptée.....	3076

Loi de 2004 sur l'harmonisation de la terminologie fiscale, projet de loi 105, <i>M. Sorbara</i>	
Adoptée.....	3076
<i>M. Sorbara</i>	3076

Loi de 2004 sur les mesures budgétaires (n° 2), projet de loi 106, <i>M. Sorbara</i>	
Adoptée.....	3076

CONTENTS

Monday 21 June 2004

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Volunteer firefighters	
Mr Arnott.....	3073
National Aboriginal Day	
Mr Brown.....	3073
Bonnie Brae Health Care Centre	
Mr Hardeman.....	3073
Municipal restructuring	
Mr Prue.....	3074
Blyth Festival	
Mrs Mitchell.....	3074
West Lincoln Memorial Hospital	
Mr Hudak.....	3074
Diagnostic services	
Mr Wilkinson.....	3074
Gay Pride Week	
Ms Wynne.....	3075
Government's record	
Mr Parsons.....	3075

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

Standing committee on the Legislative Assembly	
Mr Racco.....	3075
Report deemed adopted.....	3075

FIRST READINGS

Transitional Physician Payment Review Act, 2004, Bill 104, Mr Smitherman	
Agreed to.....	3076
Mr Smitherman.....	3076
Tax Terminology Harmonization Act, 2004, Bill 105, Mr Sorbara	
Agreed to.....	3076
Mr Sorbara.....	3076
Budget Measures Act, 2004 (No. 2), Bill 106, Mr Sorbara	
Agreed to.....	3076
Mr Sorbara.....	3076

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

Air quality	
Mrs Dombrowsky.....	3077
Mr Barrett.....	3077
Ms Churley.....	3078

ORAL QUESTIONS

Health care services	
Mrs Witmer.....	3081
Mr McGuinty.....	3082
Ms Churley.....	3085
Mr Smitherman.....	3085

Health premiums

Mr Baird.....	3082
Mr McGuinty.....	3082, 3083, 3084
Mr Hampton.....	3083
Mr Prue.....	3084

School safety

Mr Flaherty.....	3085
Mr Kennedy.....	3085

Air quality

Mr Berardinetti.....	3086
Mrs Dombrowsky.....	3086

Minister's comments

Mr Dunlop.....	3086
Mr Kwinter.....	3087

Pickering nuclear generating station

Mr Hampton.....	3087
Mr Duncan.....	3087

Domestic violence

Mr Sergio.....	3087
Ms Papatello.....	3088

Trillium Foundation

Mr Sterling.....	3088
Mrs Meilleur.....	3088

Automobile insurance

Mr Marchese.....	3089
Mr Sorbara.....	3089

Heritage conservation

Mr Delaney.....	3089
Mrs Meilleur.....	3089

Distance education

Mr Hudak.....	3090
Mr Kennedy.....	3090

Municipal restructuring

Mr Prue.....	3090
Mr Gerretsen.....	3091

PETITIONS

Health care

Mr Murdoch.....	3091
-----------------	------

Municipal restructuring

Mr Prue.....	3091
--------------	------

Chiropractic services

Ms Wynne.....	3091
Mr Ouellette.....	3092
Mr Brownell.....	3092
Mr O'Toole.....	3092
Mr Brown.....	3094

Health care services

Ms Martel.....	3092
----------------	------

Physical education

Mr Leal.....	3093
--------------	------

Taxation

Mr Klees.....	3093
---------------	------

Property taxation

Ms Martel.....	3093
----------------	------

Rouge Valley Centenary

Mr Berardinetti.....	3093
----------------------	------

Health care funding

Mr Hudak.....	3093
---------------	------

Immigrants' skills

Mr Kular.....	3094
---------------	------

District of Muskoka

Mr Miller.....	3094
----------------	------

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Interim supply, government notice

of motion number 164, <i>Mr Sorbara</i>	
Mr Sorbara.....	3095
Mr Martiniuk.....	3097
Mr Prue.....	3098
Mr Brown.....	3101
Mr Yakabuski.....	3102
Mrs Cansfield.....	3103
Mr Runciman.....	3104
Mr Marchese.....	3105
Mr O'Toole.....	3107
Mr Colle.....	3108
Agreed to.....	3110

OTHER BUSINESS

Dominic Agostino

Mrs Bountrogianni.....	3079
Mr Baird.....	3080
Ms Horwath.....	3081

Visitors

The Speaker.....	3081
------------------	------

Annual report,

Office of the Ombudsman	
The Speaker.....	3091

Continued overleaf



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First Session, 38th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 38^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Tuesday 22 June 2004

Mardi 22 juin 2004



Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 22 June 2004

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 22 juin 2004

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

MUSKOKA FAMILY NETWORK

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I rise today to tell you about the Muskoka Family Network. They are the parents of adult children who have disabilities and who are living at home. I'd like to tell you about some of them.

Judith Coon lives with her son, who is 17 years old and who has Duchenne muscular dystrophy. His disease is progressing rapidly. Evelyn Hanes is into her 80s and is caring for her 60-year-old son, who has cerebral palsy. He has always lived at home. Louisa and Ron Crossthwaite are both in their retirement years and care for their son, who lives with a brain injury. Audrey Jobbins lives with her daughter, aged 39, who has cerebral palsy. Cathy Foyston's daughter, who is now 20 years of age, has Down syndrome. She will be graduating from high school this month.

These parents and their children want the option of individualized funding enabling them to have good lives as contributing members of their communities. They are asking for an alternative to traditional agency services, such as group homes or life skills programs, which the Ministry of Community and Social Services favours.

Since February, the Muskoka Family Network, through my office, have tried to meet with the Minister of Community and Social Services and been refused. They've tried to meet with the parliamentary assistant to the minister and been denied. They are desperate for an opportunity to present the case for an alternative funding model that takes the needs of the individual into consideration.

These families are in crisis. Some are in peril of losing their livelihood and others their health. They deserve an opportunity to meet with the policy-makers who determine their future and they deserve a chance to tell their stories.

HONEYWELL IN MISSISSAUGA

Mr Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I'm pleased to welcome and acknowledge Honeywell Canada vice-president Peter Keyser to the east gallery.

Honeywell is developing leading-edge technology for commercial jetliners that replaces hydraulic and pneumatic systems with more cost-effective and fuel-efficient electrical alternatives. Honeywell's know-how makes it 20% less expensive to operate a commercial airliner. Commercial aviation is a mature industry. A breakthrough, such as what Honeywell is commercializing, resets the entire competitive playing field. If successful, Honeywell's systems can dominate that profitable market niche in the commercial aviation field for the next two decades. Honeywell needs to compete with companies in countries that offer heavy financial support to their aerospace industries.

Honeywell has been a part of our Mississauga community for the past 52 years. Some 1,100 highly skilled people draw their salaries, and support their families, from Honeywell. These are high-tech, high-value jobs. Honeywell employs the type of people that our universities graduate and the type of people that are trained abroad and choose Canada as their home.

As Honeywell's MPP, I will be there to help bring the skills, resources and attention of the Ontario government to bear and to help keep a profitable and strategic aerospace firm in Mississauga West and in Ontario.

CANCER TREATMENT

Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington): I rise again on the current funding challenges facing Cancer Care Ontario under the budget cap imposed by the Liberal government and the Minister of Health. In the past weeks, I raised the issue of the delisting of zoledronic acid treatments, and on January 28 this was done for prostate cancer patients for the first time in Ontario's history. Since that time, it has been tragic that I have to report there have been 3,366 new cases of prostate cancer diagnosed and over 600 deaths. What is happening in Ontario in cancer care is scandalous.

The life-saving drug Rituximab is approved by Cancer Care Ontario for advanced non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. Five provinces are providing this to all patients who require it, yet in Ontario it is only those over 65. The BC Clinical Review showed overall survival rates of 58% fewer deaths. Yet Ontario today routinely sends working men and women to the United States for treatments that can cost up to US\$26,000.

Now we learn that Cancer Care Ontario has cancelled all regional cancer centres' discretionary funding for the cost of expensive chemotherapy drugs, and treating physicians are legally and ethically required to inform

patients of all reasonable treatments and their options to save their lives even if those options are unavailable due to provincial budget cuts. The Liberal government must remove the hard cap on new cancer drugs so that Cancer Care Ontario can provide cancer care and save lives instead of balancing budgets and saving money.

TECHNOLOGY IN SCHOOLS

Mrs Linda Jeffrey (Brampton Centre): I rise today to speak about my recent visit to Cardinal Leger Secondary School in my riding of Brampton Centre. This visit was part of our government's MPP back-to-school initiatives. I spent the day touring and learning from faculty and students. While speaking to the staff, I was informed of the pressing need for updated technological equipment in the classroom. The teachers questioned the relevance of teaching students on outdated systems that are no longer used in the real world. Our schools need more funding for technological equipment in the classroom in order to prepare our students for the current job market.

That is why I am in full support of our budget, which includes \$90 million in capital funding to address the need for improved technological facilities in our classrooms. I'm proud to be part of a government that is committed to repairing our education system. Our government has chosen to focus on student success rather than declaring war on our teachers and students. Our government's commitments to cap class size, invest in schools and add more teachers are just some of the ways we are going to restore our education system. I would like to thank our government for its leadership, and I would like to thank Cardinal Leger Secondary School for its hospitality.

PAYDAY LOAN SERVICES

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leeds-Grenville): It can be argued that payday loans involving exorbitant interest rates, high fees and punishing penalties for people who cannot pay are nothing more than loan sharking with a quasi-legal face. The lives of desperate people being drawn into the web of payday loan operations are being destroyed. When their pockets are empty, the working poor, seniors of limited income and families on social benefits are easy prey for the lure of short-term loans. As we've learned through recent Toronto Star reports, this supply of easy money is the crack cocaine of deficit financing. Once people get behind, they never catch up and they are reduced to near servitude by these money lenders. We're discovering that many of these people are families surviving on Ontario Works and Ontario disability benefits, who are using most of their monthly income to satisfy interest and fee charges. Their families suffer when their income no longer meets the demands of the short-term lenders.

1340

The proliferation of payday loan stores in Ontario must be checked now by decisive government action, not

investigation, studies or reviews. While a number of civil actions have been launched, they could take years to reach court. The Attorney General should initiate criminal charges against some of these lenders. If the charges fail in court, then stricter, more defined law can be written. Failure to act will serve as a McGuinty government endorsement of these business practices.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): The telephones continue to ring with people upset not only over the government's budget and the delisting of health care services such as chiropractors and eye doctors, but on auto insurance. I've gotten a number of phone calls over the last week, which I returned, where people are saying their insurance rates are yet going up; this despite a government that said it has fixed the problem.

Remember the Liberal government, Mr Speaker? You ran in the last election with them, where they said they were going to reduce auto insurance rates in the province. Well, I'm telling you there's no 20% reduction; there's no 10% reduction. There are increases. I have a number of cases where people are saying to me that they are seeing their auto insurance going up this year despite not having any changes when it comes to their driving record, any changes when it comes to the auto they own. They are saying, "Didn't the government promise that they were going to have a reduction?"

I want to say that there is but one solution, and that is to move to public auto. Public auto insurance will provide very good rates when it comes to the consumers of Ontario and will provide a good benefit. If we take a look at all of the systems, Quebec, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and British Columbia, even the most expensive system, which I would argue is probably Quebec's, is far cheaper than in the province of Ontario.

I want to renew the call for this government to recognize that it is basically not providing a reduction in auto insurance rates and that they should take the NDP platform and enact public auto insurance in the province of Ontario.

NORTHERN ONTARIO

Mr David Oraziotti (Sault Ste Marie): I'd like to express my support for the steps our government has taken through our recent budget to help address the serious economic challenges in northern Ontario and to reinvest in health care and education. For the first time since the Peterson government, our Premier, finance minister and caucus have demonstrated real commitment to the people of northern Ontario. Our budget will ensure that northern Ontario residents, nearly one million, will share in the future prosperity and growth of our province.

While the past two provincial governments turned their backs on northerners, we are keeping our promises to help stimulate and transform northern Ontario's economy. Youth out-migration and high unemployment rates

in the north are a reflection of the disgraceful legacy of the past government's treatment of this region of our province. The 2001 census numbers reveal that the unemployment rate for youth in the north was 47% higher than in the rest of the province.

Our budget addresses years of neglect by reinvesting in the north through our northern prosperity plan. Northerners have embraced this change: \$285 million for the north's transportation system; \$135 million through the NOHFC to foster job growth; the creation of the northern Ontario grow bonds program for business development; \$10 million for the GO North incentive program.

The approach our government has taken with northerners is truly refreshing. The northern caucus supports our government's budget, and I would like to make it clear that our dedication to revitalizing northern Ontario is unwavering.

AIR QUALITY

Ms Laurel C. Broten (Etobicoke-Lakeshore): As we're entering the first days of summer, we're reminded of the record number of smog days that southern Ontario has been experiencing over the last several years. Each year, weakly regulated industries spew increasing numbers of carcinogens and smog-causing pollutants into the air that we breathe.

Above and beyond the numbers is the human cost of the poisoned air. The Ontario Medical Association estimates that over 1,900 premature deaths in Ontario are caused by air pollution each year, with over 10,000 extra hospital admissions, 13,000 emergency visits and 47 million sick days each year.

This is a cost we cannot ignore. Our government's plan to fight smog in Ontario is the most far-reaching commitment to improved air quality by an Ontario government in over 30 years. I congratulate Minister Dombrowsky for her leadership.

I can tell you that in my community of Etobicoke-Lakeshore, we care deeply about air quality. I've been involved with a group over the years called GASP. GASP stands for Good Air, Safe Power. In Etobicoke-Lakeshore we had one glaring contributor to our air pollution problem, the coal-fired Lakeview generating station. Thanks to Energy Minister Duncan, our government announced the closing of Lakeview by the end of 2005.

In combination, these two instances will make Ontario a province where we will have cleaner air and a healthier environment in years to come.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mr Phil McNeely (Ottawa-Orléans): I'm delighted that community mental health and addiction programs in Ontario are receiving an infusion of \$65 million in new dollars this year, as announced in last month's budget. Our four-year plan includes an additional \$120 million

over the next few years, which will mean \$583 million by 2007-08 for the community-based system. As a result, I am encouraged that lack of capacity in the community sector will be effectively addressed.

As in the Ottawa area, for example, where we have seen waiting lists of from one to three years for formal support for those with the highest level of need and priority, being starved of government funding has meant that peer and family support services have been stretched to the limit trying to meet the breadth of need of those with mental health and addiction problems.

I want to commend the commitment and dedication of those working in the field, who have advocated tirelessly for investments in the future of their loved ones and clients. Our progress today is largely to their credit. We must now all work together to ensure that services are delivered in the area where they can be most effective.

My colleague from Ottawa Centre, Richard Patten, who happens to be out right now, is an important team player in these efforts. I know he won't mention this himself, but last Wednesday he received the first community inspiration award from the Royal Ottawa Hospital Foundation for his work in bringing in Brian's Law and for his support in the creation of a state-of-the-art mental health facility at the new Royal Ottawa Hospital.

Thank you to all who work so tirelessly for the good of our community, and thank you, Richard, for your public service.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

TRUSTEE STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LES FIDUCIAIRES

Mr Klees moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 107, An Act to amend the Trustee Act and the Limitations Act, 2002 with respect to a limitation period for actions for wrongful death and other estate matters / *Projet de loi 107, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les fiduciaires et la Loi de 2002 sur la prescription des actions en ce qui concerne le délai de prescription pour les actions engagées à la suite d'un décès dû à un acte délictuel et d'autres questions relatives au patrimoine.*

The Speaker (Mr Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I am tabling this bill in memory of Jennifer Dawson, who was infected with HIV through tainted blood and died of transfusion-associated AIDS at age 40. Jenny is survived by three children, Tamara Lynne, Julie Anne and Mathew Patrick.

Their father, Patrick Dawson, brought to my attention a defect in Ontario's limitations law that precludes wrongful death claims unless the tort is discovered within two years of death. This bill rectifies that defect by

amending section 38 of the Trustee Act to provide for the limitation period for the executor or administrator of the deceased to bring an action to expire on the second anniversary of the day on which a claim was actually discovered rather than the second anniversary of the date of death.

The adoption of this amendment will allow the Dawson family to apply for compensation that was made available to other persons and estates that were affected by HIV through blood transfusions under a plan by the Red Cross that was established under a federal bankruptcy law, the CCAA. This amendment will bring Ontario's law into line with every other province in Canada. It's the right thing to do. I trust that I'll have the support of the Legislature.

1350

**CARLIE MYKE
AND BRANDON WHITE ACT
(SAFE SCHOOL ZONES HIGHWAY
TRAFFIC ACT AMENDMENT), 2004**

**LOI CARLIE MYKE ET BRANDON WHITE
DE 2004 (MODIFICATION DU CODE
DE LA ROUTE SUR LA SÉCURITÉ
DES ZONES D'ÉCOLE)**

Mr Levac moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 108, An Act to honour Carlie Myke and Brandon White by amending the Highway Traffic Act to reduce the rate of speed permitted on highways surrounding schools and to ensure traffic safety in school zones / *Projet de loi 108, Loi en hommage à Carlie Myke et Brandon White modifiant le Code de la route afin de réduire la vitesse autorisée sur les voies publiques autour des écoles et d'assurer la sécurité routière dans les zones d'école.*

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): The bill reduces the speed at which motor vehicles may travel on highways—or roads, as we know them—surrounding schools. The rate of speed is reduced to 30 kilometres an hour in the case of two-lane highways or roads and is reduced by 10 kilometres an hour in the case of highways with more than two lanes.

The bill requires municipalities and trustees of police villages to establish school safety teams to review traffic problems surrounding schools in the municipality or the village and to report to the municipality, village, school board and the Ministry of Transportation any recommendations that there are to improve the safety of our children around our schools.

VISITORS

Mrs Linda Jeffrey (Brampton Centre): On a point of order, Speaker: Can I beg your indulgence and

introduce my parents who are visiting today from Cobourg, June and Mike Rooney?

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): That's not a point of order.

**HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT
(HELMETS), 2004**

**LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT
LE CODE DE LA ROUTE (CASQUES)**

Mr Levac moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 109, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act / *Projet de loi 109, Loi modifiant le Code de la route.*

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): This bill amends the Highway Traffic Act to make it an offence for any person to use a skateboard, scooter, in-line skates or roller skates on a road without wearing a helmet. Parents and guardians of a person under the age of 16 are also guilty of an offence if they authorize or knowingly permit that person to contravene this restriction. A police officer may require a person to provide identification if the police officer finds that person contravening these restrictions. The authority to make regulations to exempt persons from the requirement to wear helmets is repealed.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): On a point of order, Speaker: I seek unanimous consent to proceed with second and third reading of government Bill 104.

The Speaker: I heard a no.

ANSWERS TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Mr Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): On a point of order, Speaker: My point of order is pursuant to standing order 97(d). On April 29, I filed a question with the Minister of the Environment to provide me with a list of all studies and reports the ministry and the Environmental Review Tribunal have, including their dates and authors, relating to the disposal of waste at the Adams mine site.

According to section 97(d), "The minister shall answer such written questions within 24 sitting days." She has not done so at this time. Speaker, I would ask you to ask her to follow the standing orders.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): To the Minister of the Environment, I want to remind you that you are required, under standing order 97(d), to provide answers to written questions within 24 sitting days. Your response is now overdue, and I would ask that you give the House some indication as to when the answer to the member will be forthcoming.

Hon Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment): My understanding is that the information requested by the member has been sent to his office.

Mr Sterling: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I believe the minister is supposed to provide not only me,

but the table, with an answer. I have not received that answer.

In addition to that point of order, I would like to draw attention to this minister not answering my request of the same date: "Would the Minister of the Environment provide a list of all studies and reports the ministry and the Environmental Review Tribunal have (including their dates and authors), relating to the actual or proposed water taking of OMYA (Canada) Inc from the Tay River."

That was dated the same date. This minister has not followed standing order 97(d), and I would ask you to ask her to comply with that standing order.

The Speaker: As I said earlier, I hope that we follow those requests from the member that are due to be responded to. On the previous question, the member has indicated he has not received it, and I'm quite sure the minister and yourself will make sure this happens, and should indicate accordingly.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I move that pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 pm until 9:30 pm on Tuesday, June 22, 2004, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): The government House leader has moved government notice of motion 148. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

All those against, say "nay."

I think the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1358 to 1403.

The Speaker: All those in favour, please rise and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne
Bartolucci, Rick
Bentley, Christopher
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Bountrogianni, Marie
Bradley, James J.
Brotten, Laurel C.
Brownell, Jim
Bryant, Michael
Cansfield, Donna H.
Caplan, David
Chambers, Mary Anne V.
Colle, Mike
Cordiano, Joseph
Crozier, Bruce
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Di Cocco, Caroline
Dombrowsky, Leona
Duguid, Brad
Duncan, Dwight
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Fonseca, Peter
Gerretsen, John
Gravelle, Michael
Jeffrey, Linda
Kular, Kuldeep
Kwinter, Monte
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Leal, Jeff
Levac, Dave
Marsales, Judy
Matthews, Deborah
Mauro, Bill
McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine
Millooy, John
Mitchell, Carol
Mossop, Jennifer F.
Oraziotti, David

Parsons, Ernie
Patten, Richard
Peters, Steve
Phillips, Gerry
Pupatello, Sandra
Qaadri, Shafiq
Racco, Mario G.
Ramsay, David
Rinaldi, Lou
Sandals, Liz
Smith, Monique
Sorbara, Greg
Takhar, Harinder S.
Van Bommel, Maria
Watson, Jim
Wilkinson, John
Wong, Tony C.
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

Nays

Arnott, Ted
Barrett, Toby
Bisson, Gilles
Chudleigh, Ted
Flaherty, Jim
Hardeman, Ernie
Jackson, Cameron

Klees, Frank
Kormos, Peter
Marchese, Rosario
Miller, Norm
Murdoch, Bill
O'Toole, John
Ouellette, Jerry J.

Prue, Michael
Runciman, Robert W.
Sterling, Norman W.
Tascona, Joseph N.
Witmer, Elizabeth

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 59; the nays are 19.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

VISITORS

Mrs Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: At this time I would like to welcome to the Legislature the McKellar family. Their son Ian is a page. I'd like to welcome Anne and Ron, the mother and the father; the sister, Roseanne, and brother, Danny. We welcome the family.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): That is not a point of order, but welcome.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

TOURISM

Hon James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism and Recreation): This is Tourism Week in Canada. It is an opportunity for communities across the country to celebrate the contribution that tourism makes to economic prosperity and quality of life.

Here in Ontario, we know that tourism counts. It is our seventh-largest export industry and generates \$18 billion a year in tourism revenues. Nearly 350,000 people work in businesses catering to the tourism trade. Tourism is our largest seasonal employer, as well as the largest employment sector for Ontario youth.

The Ontario tourism industry has had cause for concern this past year, as we were confronted with one crisis after another, most notably the SARS scare. It speaks well of this House that in our darkest hour during the SARS outbreak last year, all parties put aside their differences to give unanimous support to efforts to help our tourism industry. Those efforts have paid dividends for tourism operators and tourism employees across the province, but we still have much to do before we can declare our tourism industry recovered.

My ministry has just recently received an independent analysis of the \$62 million invested through Ontario's tourism recovery program, from the onset of SARS through the end of the 2003-04 fiscal year. Here are some of the highlights: It prompted an additional 3.6 million tourism visits to Ontario; generated additional tourism spending of \$687 million; supported 13,700 more direct and indirect jobs; and as a final positive impact, the

The Speaker: All those against, please rise and be recognized by the Clerk.

tourism recovery program spread the benefits all around the province.

The additional tourism spending amounted to \$285 million in the GTA, where we worked in partnership with the Toronto 03 Alliance, and totalled \$402 million outside of the GTA. According to the analysis by PKF Consulting, each dollar invested through the tourism recovery program generated a return of \$11. The tourism recovery money was money well spent.

But we still have a way to go if we want to put Ontario back on track as a top competitor in global tourism. That is why I'm pleased to announce today that we are releasing the Ontario tourism strategy, a strategy that charts a new course for tourism in our province. The Ontario tourism strategy, developed jointly with representatives of the tourism industry, sets out five strategic directions.

1410

First, we will embrace a "visitor first" philosophy. We will make use of the latest market research to know what visitors expect, what motivates them and what satisfies them. We will have quality standards that are reached and maintained through rigorous staff training and a commitment to service excellence. With industry participation, Ontario will develop a quality-rating system to help visitors make informed choices, and we will encourage its adoption across the province.

Second, we will develop new destinations and experiences that build on Ontario's strengths. We will focus our investment on five or six icon destinations, selected in consultation with the tourism industry, that have the greatest potential to attract more visitors to our province. At the same time, we will work with other destinations to help them identify and capitalize on their tourism assets.

Third, we will build the image and influence of tourism in Ontario. We will work with municipalities and other partners to increase awareness of the importance of tourism at the local level. We will reach out to young people to pursue training and career opportunities in tourism. We will strengthen the role of our tourism industry associations in public policy, and we will celebrate our business achievements and innovations.

Fourth, we will strengthen our strategic marketing. The province will provide marketing leadership to ensure campaigns and promotions are effectively researched, coordinated, focused and evaluated. There will be stronger destination marketing at the local and provincial levels. We will encourage the use of information technology by tourism operators across Ontario so that visitors can shop for and book tourism products on-line.

Finally, we will adopt an "all of government" approach to tourism in Ontario. The Ontario tourism strategy will guide all provincial activities relating to tourism, with resources deployed in support of the strategy. The value of tourism assets will be recognized in land-use and environmental design decisions. Ontario will work with other governments at all levels to achieve the policy goals of the tourism strategy.

With the Ontario tourism strategy, the McGuinty government is proud to unveil its new vision for tourism

in Ontario: Innovative operators, welcoming destinations and great experiences will make Ontario the place to visit again and again.

Both government and the tourism industry will participate in the implementation of the Ontario tourism strategy. It is a sector strategy designed to ensure that tourism contributes even more to the prosperity of our communities and helps all Ontarians enjoy a quality of life that is second to none.

NATIONAL ABORIGINAL DAY

Hon Michael Bryant (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): I'm very pleased to stand today in the Legislature to extend my best wishes to all aboriginal people across Ontario. Yesterday I was delighted to have the opportunity to celebrate National Aboriginal Day in our nation's capital. Aboriginal people are Canada's first people. National Aboriginal Day permits us to celebrate and to rededicate ourselves to the important issues that span so many aspects of Canadian life for aboriginal people and for all Canadians.

The McGuinty government is taking a new approach when it comes to aboriginal people. There is a new spirit of change, a new spirit of respect, a new spirit of co-operation. One of the first things the Premier did when he came into office was to extend an invitation to aboriginal leaders to meet with him here at Queen's Park. We hosted that meeting together earlier this year. We wanted to hear from aboriginal leaders as to what their priorities are.

One of those priorities, of course, is better health care for aboriginal Ontarians, so in April we acted. The McGuinty government announced it is investing over \$166 million over five years to specifically improve the health of aboriginal residents of Ontario through the great aboriginal healing and wellness strategy. We are not stopping there. In our recent budget, we announced that we were increasing this investment by \$25 million over five years. That is over \$191 million that we are now investing in aboriginal health care in Ontario.

Yesterday also marked the beginning of the aboriginal health advocacy initiative, a joint program between MADD and Ontario Indian Friendship Centres. This is an important initiative that we encourage and support. We thank some of the leaders who are here in the east gallery today: Susan Barberstock, Gertie Beaucage, Vicky Laforge, Jo-Anne Miller, Carolyn Swinson, Mary Sultana, Heather Levecque and Phyllis Williams.

It's another example of the kind of work that is possible through the aboriginal healing and wellness strategy. It is clear to me that the quality of life of all Ontarians improves when we have strong and prosperous aboriginal communities.

The McGuinty government is working closely with aboriginal communities and aboriginal leaders. We share common goals. By working together, we can achieve our goals: stronger communities and healthier communities for us all.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Responses?**Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford):**

I'm pleased to respond to the Attorney General's statement on National Aboriginal Day.

In 1996, the government designated June 21 as National Aboriginal Day as a result of the cultural significance of the summer solstice, which is the first day of summer and the longest day of the year. Across the entire country, aboriginal people celebrate their heritage on this day and in the days ahead. The Barrie Native Friendship Centre in my riding has played a pivotal role in enhancing the lives of aboriginal people.

This day and these celebrations are a testament to the unique and distinct culture and contributions that First Nations, Inuit and Metis peoples have made, and continue to make, to our province and our country. These festivities also allow Ontarians to reflect on the important role First Nations people have made to the very fabric of our province and our country as a whole.

National Aboriginal Day is an opportunity to learn more about the rich culture and history of aboriginal peoples, as well as a chance to join and participate in aboriginal day festivities that are being held from coast to coast in this country.

Ontario is proud to be the home of the largest aboriginal population in this country. I encourage everyone to get out and join the celebrations.

TOURISM

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): It's my pleasure to respond to the Minister of Tourism's statement on the new Ontario tourism strategy.

I would like to point out that basically I think this new tourism strategy is generally a positive thing. I would like to compliment its author, the former Minister of Tourism, Mr Frank Klees, the member from Oak Ridges who, in the year 2002, crisscrossed this province consulting with many different groups and spent a lot of time working on this tourism strategy. Things sometimes move slowly in government. I'm glad to see that Mr Klees's strategy is finally getting implemented.

Last year, tourism faced some significant challenges in Ontario, particularly with SARS. I'm pleased to see that this report shows that of the money that was invested by our government in SARS, for each dollar that was invested there was an \$11 return. That is certainly my feeling in terms of tourism investment—it's one of the few things government can invest in and really get a benefit from their investment.

Last year, I was pleased to play a small part in the creation of the new northern tourism committee, which is working with the Ontario Tourism Marketing Partnership to help invest many millions more that were approved by our government in northern tourism ventures. I would like to say that I think the Ontario Tourism Marketing Partnership works very well. It works well because there's buy-in from industry. You have real dollars from real operators that go into each of those projects that are

approved by the various marketing committees of the Ontario Tourism Marketing Partnership.

While I think this is a generally positive announcement, I would have to say that the other things the government is doing are hurting small business and tourism. If you look in the budget, tourism went from \$213 million to \$184 million. Of course, one of the biggest things that will negatively affect tourism in this budget is the new health tax, which is going to be a significant bite out of the disposable income of most Ontario residents. That's money they just don't have to spend on their tourism plans. The delisting of health services directly affects the money people have left to spend on tourism.

1420

Also, the new regulations very much affect the tourism operators, particularly regulations like the new drinking water regulation, 170/03. Many tourism businesses are small businesses; in fact, 90% of them have 20 or fewer employees. It's very challenging for a small business to try to meet all the various regulations and still survive. I know in the bed and breakfast sector they are having some significant challenges dealing with the water regulation, but also dealing with the new fire code. Government has to do everything it can to try to help those businesses.

In your background paper it says that the business climate is not conducive to growth and that some of the challenges are insurance, utilities, property taxes and many other pressures on the cost of doing business. I think those are the kinds of things the government has to pay close attention to in order to assist small business.

NATIONAL ABORIGINAL DAY

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): Yes, yesterday we celebrated National Aboriginal Day. Yes, most of the members of the provincial assembly, and probably, I would guess, a number of candidates in the federal election attended those events as well.

But I have to say there's not much to celebrate about. If we look at our First Nations communities across this province, we don't have a lot to be proud of. We look at substandard water and sewerage in most of the communities, where you can't drink the water out of the tap. We look at communities that don't have housing. We look at Attawapiskat, to just name one, where you have four families in a house and children trying to learn. How do you learn in that environment? We look at recreational facilities in hardly any of those communities for the community members, and especially for young people trying to find ways to vent off the energy they have. We look at roads that are in substandard condition. We look at the lack of transportation infrastructure. There is not much to celebrate.

I recognize that the federal government, by and large, is responsible for the mess First Nations communities find themselves in. I have to say that I am not proud of the federal record, of the current Liberal government in Ottawa and the Conservative government before that.

There is an abysmal situation in First Nations communities across this province. However, they are citizens of Ontario, and we, as a Legislature, and you, as a cabinet, have a responsibility to make sure those communities are brought into the province of Ontario. We need to make sure we fund the many funding requests coming forward from First Nations.

Because, yes, there is some hope. There is a change of command in Ontario, and they wish to participate. That's why the chief of Ogoki was here last week asking to finish the arena project for his community that they so much need. That's why, today, Chief Leo Friday from Kashechewan will be here to meet with Minister Bartolucci to ask for dollars for a band office, because the band office in Kashechewan is in an abysmal state.

And that's why, quite frankly, the community of Attawapiskat is at its wits' end when it comes to the schooling situation in that community. Can you imagine, the only high school in town, the only primary school, contaminated with diesel fuel, has been shut for five years and the federal government has yet to respond? No community in this province would allow that to happen. But because they're an aboriginal community up in northern Ontario on James Bay, the federal government says, "Far away. Don't have to think about it."

I say we, as a province, have a responsibility. Let us work with our First Nations so that truly, one day, they can celebrate something about being in Ontario.

TOURISM

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I want to take this opportunity to congratulate the member for his passion, fervour, excitement, exuberance that he demonstrated in his delivery of this plan. I think Ontario needs a minister who is fully engaged in the ministry. And who else but Jim Bradley to control those one-armed bandits? We need him in that ministry, I can tell you that.

There is no doubt we have a problem in our tourism industry in Ontario. The Greater Toronto Hotel Association says that the number of visitors to the Toronto area is down by about four million since 1998. So we can't just blame current events for our woes, like SARS. We need long-term visionary thinking to reverse this slide, they say; and alas, thus the plan.

Does anybody believe that this plan is going to work? Only Jim Bradley, the one who's going to control the one-armed bandits, believes in it. They are going to tell you, Jim, that your budget has gone down this year from \$213 million to \$184 million. That's a \$29-million cut and, Jim, next year it's another 12% cut. So what we've got is a plan without resources, a plan without money. Minister Bradley will do more with less. Where did we hear that before? From the Tories, who promised to do a lot more with less. It didn't work with them and it won't work with you. Notwithstanding the passion, the fervour, the excitement and the exuberance that you bring to the job, Jim Bradley, you can't institute this plan without money. It's going to get worse this coming year and it'll

get worse in the future. You've got to do something about it.

GORDON MILLS

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Speaker: I believe we have unanimous consent for each party to speak for up to five minutes to pay tribute to a former member and colleague, Gordon Mills.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Do we have unanimous consent? Agreed.

Hon James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism and Recreation): It's a genuine honour for me to rise in the House today to speak on behalf of my caucus colleagues on the passing of Gordon Mills, whom many of us who served in the Legislature when Gordon was there from 1990 to 1995 will remember extremely well. Gordon Mills, first of all, was a person you would call a character. Not everybody is a character in this House, but Gordon was. He was genuinely a colourful performer both inside and outside of the Legislature.

We in this House are part of what I think we would all refer to as an honoured tradition. Certainly there are times in the debate when it can become very heated and nerves become frayed. We all realize what a privilege it is, however, to work in this place with colleagues from each of the political parties. I think we form friendships with those individuals who serve in this House regardless of their political affiliation. That's why it's so important to take time, as we do upon the passing of a member, to reflect on the contributions made by those past members.

I had the pleasure of knowing Gordon Mills as the MPP, first of all, for Durham East. Mr Mills was elected as a member of the NDP in that sweep of 1990 and served as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs—he had some municipal experience, which made it most appropriate that he was appointed to that position—but also to the Solicitor General and the Minister of Correctional Services. Gordon had some very strong views in that particular field as well that he wasn't afraid to share with members of this House and the general public.

More importantly, Gordon Mills was known beyond the halls of this Legislature as a husband to Cecilia, and as a father and grandfather to his children and many grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. He was known as a writer and columnist to the readers of the *Orono Weekly Times*, as chairperson of public works and the Barrie-Innisfil annexation committee—that was always controversial, but Gord never stepped back from controversy at all—and of course as a military officer in Canada and with NATO from 1958 until 1979. This is rather remarkable: During that time he received the United Nations Service Medal and the Canadian Meritorious Service Decoration. Gordon will always be remembered in this place as a—I'll put it this way—zealous advocate for his beliefs and I think an honest voice for his constituents. He was respected for speaking his mind

and taking all members of this House to task for not respecting the traditions we hold dear. I'm going to mention that right now.

I think one of the moving times, emotional times, in this House was watching Gordon rise at the time we pay tribute each year to those who have fallen in battle and served in our armed forces. A tear would come to Gord's eyes as he stood as a government member on this side of the House and spoke on behalf of the government and the New Democratic Party at the time of remembrance, very close to Remembrance Day, when we in this House pay tribute to the fallen and to those who have served.

1430

I well remember that he had stories he would tell, not only of his service in the armed forces, but of his days as a youth in Britain, when his country was under attack and things did not look very good. Gordon talked about those days. He talked about the VE Day celebrations when there was victory in Europe and the genuine joy coming from the population. He was part of that as a young person. So whenever we wanted to have a spokesperson in this House who had some personal experience, and a genuine emotional feeling for that experience, Gordon Mills was the person to rise, speaking on behalf of all of us.

He serves as an example to all of us in this House, now and in the future, that success in politics is only part of a successful life. This was a man who filled his days by serving his community—that's outside of this House—and his country, be it as a writer, a military officer or a public official. At a time when apathy and cynicism are frequently discussed in the news media, people like Gordon Mills remind us of the basic purpose of representative politics. That is to serve the people, to make your voice heard and to make your community a better place in which to live.

Gordon was a person who had genuine emotions. He never feigned them. We're in a House where it is sometimes considered to be showtime. It wasn't showtime for Gord; it was the genuine emotions that came out in everything he said. Sometimes he was angry and sometimes he said things he was sorry he said later on, but we didn't care about that. He was a person who could admit to that and press on.

On behalf of the Liberal caucus, I'd like to extend my condolences to the Mills family, who are here with us in the gallery today. I know that you are proud to have called him a husband, a father, a grandfather and a great-grandfather, as we are proud to have called him a friend and colleague.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It's indeed a pleasure, on behalf of the Conservative caucus, to stand and pay tribute to the late Gord Mills, former MPP for the riding I represent, now called Durham, then Durham East. Gord Mills served with distinction in this House from 1990 to 1995.

I know our thoughts, as has been said, are with his wife, Cecilia, their children, Keith and his wife, Patricia; Pamela and her husband, Gord Werry; and all the family.

Gord Mills was the dear grandfather of Andrew and his wife, Jen; Diana; Scott; Carla and her husband, Jeff; and Wayne. He was the loved great-grandfather of Erica and Evan.

Gord Mills was a man of many talents, as has been mentioned. He was from England, a farmer, a member of the Canadian military police, a former Barrie municipal councillor and a tax auditor in the Ontario public service.

Having just moved to the area of Orono, and then the town of Newcastle, with the 1990 election approaching, he paid a visit to the campaign team in Newcastle to see if he could help out. The story was that they asked, "Would you like to be a candidate?" So that's how Gord Mills became a candidate.

That was a very interesting election. The then incumbent, MPP Sam Cureatz, had decided at the last moment to step aside and not run. He was replaced by Kirk Kemp, a young man who had just been called in in the last few days. The other, the Liberal candidate at the time, was Marilyn Pearce, now the mayor of Scugog. Gord won in a sweeping victory under Bob Rae, I think with something under 50 votes. He did it with charm and grace, never offending a single person in the entire campaign. He won because he was well-liked.

Gord hadn't planned to become an MPP. He had recently retired, as I said, to move to the area and in fact was planning on spending a bit of time in Florida. But he never backed away from a new challenge. He was always ready to serve when duty called. That's how Gord Mills came to Queen's Park and served as Durham East's MPP.

I'm certain my colleagues from the NDP caucus will detail Gord's service here in the Legislature. I did have the privilege of attending here one day during the session when Gord was bringing forth local legislation, very successfully, I might add. I know he served with distinction. On a personal note, he contributed to and was a widely read columnist in, as was said, the Orono Times, a local newspaper still not part of the main metro chains.

At the request of the municipality, he introduced legislation that changed the name of the town of Newcastle to the municipality of Clarington. You might say there wouldn't be a Clarington today if it wasn't for Gord Mills. It's interesting because that debate still goes on today. They may change it again. That's up to John Gerretsen.

Gord Mills was a strong advocate for older adults in our riding and, indeed, wherever he went. He was fondly remembered in Wilmot Creek, a retirement community, for his advocacy in passage of Bill 21, An Act to amend certain Acts with respect to Land Leases. It's a land community and he took great interest to solve the problem.

My constituent Denise Turner worked with Gord as a legislative assistant. She recalls that he was a kind, gentle man who was fun to be with and passionate about serving the people of Durham East. She remembers that he especially enjoyed recalling his military experience and writing his weekly newspaper column in the Orono Times.

Ms Turner also points out that as a former member of the Canadian military, he was passionate about observing Remembrance Day and honouring all those who gave their lives in the cause of freedom. The well-being of veterans was always an important agenda for Gord.

Gord also was active in his church, where he served as a lay leader as well as a speaker.

On a personal note, I might add that Gord Mills and I represented different political parties, but we both served the people of Durham, the constituents, through the 1990s. It was a pleasure to follow in Gord's footsteps. I respected him for his strong convictions and his willingness to help his constituents and others. He was a devoted servant of Ontario.

It's important to note that he also cared deeply about many causes, but his family always came first. At this time, I would like to recognize the members of Gord's family who are with us in the gallery today.

This was a man who did his best to make our province a better place in which to follow our dreams and to fulfill our obligations. I know this House will join me in paying tribute to his accomplishments during his service both here and throughout his lifetime.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I'm proud to join in this tribute on behalf of New Democrats. I'm grateful to my colleagues for letting me represent the caucus as we pay tribute to our old friend and colleague Gord Mills. He indeed—I'm reluctant to use the past tense. I caught myself for a minute because I was going to say, "He indeed is—" He indeed was a colourful, vibrant member of this assembly and of the NDP caucus.

He had many careers which preceded his parliamentary career, as you've heard—a farmer, a police officer, a member of the armed forces serving overseas, working for the Ministry of Revenue—having retired from a number of them. We took great delight in calling upon Gord to account for not just one but two, possibly more, pensions that he might have been collecting at the point of his election, never mind any that he expected to acquire having served here.

Indeed, you heard the anecdote—it's not just an anecdote; it's the truth—about Gord having plans. He did, didn't he? He planned to settle down south of the border in warmer climates, perhaps take it easy a little bit and spend more time with grandkids and great-grandkids who came along, but that wasn't to be. He was shanghaied into running in the 1990 election campaign; make no mistake about it. But let me tell you, the years he spent here were not the years of a reluctant representative of his community. Gord was a strong, effective, active, articulate, indeed eloquent member of this assembly. He was an effective and from-the-heart spokesperson for the people, the women and men of his community.

Gord grew up in England. Growing up in England I'm sure is where he acquired his distaste for classes. From time to time there was the occasional fellow Brit in this assembly who would speak up and perhaps portray himself of a certain class from the old country and, by God, that would provoke Gord. That would light the fuse.

That would get him going. The class struggle manifested itself right here in this chamber with Gord Mills at the vanguard. Make no mistake, he had no time whatsoever for those people who would somehow pretend that by virtue of their birth or their station in life they were better than others. I tell you that heartfelt, gut-felt sense of equity and equality, that sense of fairness, made Gord Mills a stellar, an outstanding member of this chamber.

1440

I was a fan of Gord's because, from time to time, he could betray some maverick qualities—and they indeed were qualities. He wasn't afraid to tell the Premier of the day when the Premier was wrong, damn wrong, so wrong that he was right out of it. Unfortunately, the Premier of the day was disinclined to listen to Gord. I tell you that from time to time, when Gord was pushed on an issue, he would reveal the lexicon acquired in years, I presume—far be it for me to know where one acquires this language—in the armed forces, serving his country, serving humankind because he, like so many other Canadians, was overseas in Europe, part of NATO forces doing important duty. They were never tested in terms of their parliamentary or unparliamentary quality, mostly because Gord reserved them for the caucus room and for his discussions with caucus colleagues and, as I say, the leader from time to time, more so than using them in the course of his speeches here.

I just want to tell his family—his wife is here, his kids are here and his kids' spouses and his grandkids and his great-grandkids—that you've got a whole lot to be proud of. All I can say to you on behalf of this group of New Democrats, and indeed a whole lot of members of this assembly who were honoured to serve with Gord Mills in this chamber, is that we're just so awfully grateful that you shared so much of him with us. I am proud to pay tribute to this exceptional member of the Legislature, to this truly great man, great husband, great father, great grandfather.

The Speaker: I want to thank all members for their remarks and I will ensure that copies of the Hansard are sent to the family.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr Ernie Eves (Leader of the Opposition): Mr Premier, as you know, yesterday your Minister of Finance introduced his Budget Measures Act (No. 2). One of the provisions in the budget bill number 2 he referred to as "a technical change," changing the rate of the new health care tax on middle-income Ontarians, those making between \$36,000 and \$38,500, I believe, a year. Obviously this is a climb-down from the budget that was introduced in the first introduction of the health care tax in the first place. I can't believe that the Ministry of Finance officials, having had seven months to prepare

the budget and the first budget bill, would have made a mistake that would have put "an unfair burden" on modest- and middle-income Ontarians. Can we expect any other further climb-downs with respect to the budget?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs): I know the Minister of Finance would like to address this.

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): The answer to the leader of the official opposition is no. The adjustment we made in the geared-to-income Ontario health premium was for a very narrow band of income tax payers. The adjustment was made because of the effect of federal tax credits, which are clawed back in that income range. To apply the general rule and stepping up that is included in the health premium would have been unfair to that very narrow band of taxpayers. That's why, when we introduced the bill, we made that minor and technical amendment.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Supplementary.

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): Further to the Premier on the same issue, if in fact it was considered to be unfair to the taxpayers in this very narrow band of income, and you were prepared to make some changes to the budget to be more fair, Mr Premier, why are you not prepared to listen to the literally hundreds of thousands of Ontarians who are saying the entire tax is unfair? How can you continue to say, as you are quoted in the paper, "When you put your head on the pillow at night and the house is quiet and you're alone with your thoughts, there is only one thing that counts: Do you think you're doing the right thing?"

Premier, when you are alone and when it is quiet and you're listening to your thoughts, do you not hear your conscience tell you that you did the wrong thing by taxing people without having either the moral or the legal authority to do that? Can you explain how your mind can allow you the peace of mind to do what you did?

Hon Mr Sorbara: The right thing and the courageous thing and the appropriate thing and the reasonable thing and the necessary thing, having inherited a financial mess left by the previous administration—I repeat, sir, during good economic times, that party and that administration allowed Ontario to fall to an annual deficit of \$6 billion. Faced with that, we did the courageous thing and the appropriate thing, consisting of two elements: a very strict management of our expenditures over the course of the next four years and an Ontario health premium that will provide the resources to give us the best public health care system on the continent.

Mr Klees: The finance minister and the Premier will continue to stand in their place and defend the indefensible. What they have done, first of all, is they have not been straight with the people of Ontario about the financial circumstances in this province. The fact of the matter is that they were able, through a single bookkeeping entry, to move \$3.9 billion out of the deficit column just like that. I'd like to know from the finance minister how he can make a simple entry and remove \$3.9 billion out

of a deficit that he himself, through a single entry, added to that deficit to confuse the people of Ontario and convince them that he had a supposed mess. The only mess he has is in his ability to deal in a responsible way with the books of this province.

Will the finance minister at least stand and admit that he is playing an Enron type of bookkeeping with the books of this province?

Hon Mr Sorbara: That sort of accusation is absolutely unacceptable. The member mentioned "indefensible." What would have been indefensible on our part would be simply to sit back, do nothing, allow further deterioration of our health care system, allow further chaos in our schools and allow the deficit spiral to continue to drive this wonderful and affluent province further into debt. That would have been indefensible.

I want to say to my friend that the bill I introduced on budget day, the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act, will ensure that in future no government will be allowed to hide the kind of deficit they hid in their final year in office.

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

Mrs Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): My question is for the Premier. There are tens of thousands of Ontarians who do not have timely access to physicians. In fact, we know there are about 136 underserved communities and we are short about 2,000 specialists and family doctors. It is very important to increase the capacity for assessing and training foreign-trained doctors.

Despite your promise to provide timely access in this budget, we do not see any additional funding to provide for increasing the supply of foreign-trained professionals. There's no money in here for increasing the assessment and the training positions.

In fact, I would say to you, Premier, that our government put in place the eight-point plan. Where is your money—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Premier.

1450

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs): I want to thank the member for the question. In fact, she is dead wrong on this issue. We are investing an additional \$12 million for international medical graduate training in the sector this year as part of our budget commitment to health care. That is 12 million new dollars to access that talent, which has been paid for at the expense of taxpayers living in other parts of the world. We think it would be absolutely foolhardy not to capitalize on that investment made by other taxpayers. In order to accelerate that process, we are investing another \$12 million in our international medical graduate training and assessment practices.

Mrs Witmer: There is no new money here beyond the measures that we put in place to increase the supply of new physicians: the eight-point plan under Mr Clement and the expert panel that I set up.

I want to ask you, are you prepared to increase access? Are you prepared to provide the funding that would allow every international medical graduate to be assessed? And if they are eligible, are you prepared to provide the funding for these physicians in order that the people in this province can have access to physicians?

Hon Mr McGuinty: If we asked this question once, we must have asked it 100 times when we sat on that side of the House and that then minister sat on this side of the House. We are going way beyond this investment of \$12 million for international medical graduates, because one of the other messes we have to clean up, in fact one of the pressing, urgent problems we have to address, is the fact that close to one million Ontarians can't find a family doctor. That is part of the legacy of the previous government. In addition to this investment, we are investing close to \$600 million in 150 family health teams, which will be established throughout the province—teams that bring together doctors, nurse practitioners, nurses and others of the health care profession so we can provide better practice in the community and greater access for our families.

Mrs Witmer: It's obvious that the Premier is confused. He refuses to recognize that we introduced the expert panel to take a look at health resources. It was Mr Clement who put aside funding of \$36.4 million, and this government has not added any money or introduced any new measures.

I ask you again, are you prepared to provide the funding to assess every international medical graduate in order to provide access for people in this province? And are you prepared to provide the funding for those who are eligible to continue their training in order that they can practise in this province to address the doctor shortage?

Hon Mr McGuinty: What we won't do is spend \$400 million to fire thousands of nurses who are desperately needed in Ontario hospitals. I made reference to the fact that we are investing, as a result of this budget, \$12 million more for international medical graduate training and assessments. We are doubling the number of residency positions—in fact, more than doubling—from 90 to 200 in Ontario so we can access that foreign-trained talent.

HEALTH PREMIUMS

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): My question is to the Premier.

Hon Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): Nice tie.

Mr Prue: You like the tie. Good.

Premier, your health care premium is a mistake, I would suggest, of monumental proportions. It is in fact an income tax surcharge on people of modest and middle income.

Yesterday, you made a statement in this House that all of the citizens would pay income tax on the premiums that employers used to pick up. This is a disincentive to workers who bargain; this is a disincentive to people who

were allowed under the previous Peterson government until 1989. We would like you to admit one thing: that this is just a regressive income tax surcharge and it has nothing whatsoever to do with health.

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs): I'm delighted to have this opportunity to speak to this matter once more. Every single penny generated by this new premium, \$1.6 billion this year, will be invested in better-quality health care for the people of Ontario. As a result of this premium, today the Minister of Health was able to make a very important announcement in the field of public health care. We have announced today the first comprehensive changes in public health since the 1980s. As a result of this premium, \$41.7 million more will be invested through our Operation Health Protection. With that we are going to establish a new Ontario Health Protection and Promotion Agency, and we are going to be able to hire more medical and scientific staff in public labs—in fact, 180 more infectious disease positions in our public health units across the province. We are going to put ourselves in a much better position, so that should we unfortunately have to address a disease like SARS, we will be able to manage it more effectively.

Mr Prue: This is nothing more than a tax that you have imposed on the people of Ontario. It is not a premium at all. In the past, before 1989, employers paid 70% of this regressive tax. In fact, the only part that made the tax fair in those days was that 70% of people had it paid by their employers. Today, none of it can be paid by the employers because of the legislation you have tabled before us in the last couple of weeks.

My question to you is very simple: This is a levy against middle-class and middle-income people. You're calling it a premium because you had no other way to sell it. Admit it. That's why you called it a premium and not a tax.

Hon Mr McGuinty: I think putting ourselves in a position where we have the necessary infrastructure and the necessary capacity to cope with frightening new diseases like SARS is very important. One of the things this premium will enable us to do is build that capacity, build that infrastructure so we can better manage those kinds of diseases.

This is what Dr Sheela Basrur, who is our chief medical officer of health, said about our announcement this morning: "Operation Health Protection addresses the deficiencies in the public health system that were noted in all of the reports we have received on the SARS crisis." We are not going to sit on our hands. We are going to take the necessary steps to put ourselves in a position, whether it's in our hospitals or in our local public health units, to better manage and better defeat diseases like SARS.

Mr Prue: This so-called premium is nothing but a surtax in drag. I have to tell you that is what this is. You call it a premium. We call it a real surtax. You had a whole hundred ways of making this fairer. You could have taxed people who earn above \$100,000 a year by

putting back the surtax the Tories took off. That would have made you \$1.6 billion—every penny you needed. But you chose not to do that. Instead you chose to attack people like single mothers with \$30,000 of income by charging them a 24% increase.

My question to you is quite simple: Why did you sock it to middle-income people? Why did you sock it to single mothers with one or two children? Why not the myriad of options you had? Why not those people who could afford it?

Hon Mr McGuinty: Again, the facts are not incidental, and we happen to believe they are important: 48% of seniors pay nothing by way of this new premium; 43% of Ontario tax filers pay nothing; 37% of families pay nothing. If you are earning \$20,000 of taxable income, under this new premium you will pay nothing. But under the NDP budget, if you earned \$20,000 of taxable income you paid an additional \$160 in taxes.

In addition, when it comes to this public health announcement that we made today, we are also establishing for the first time increased independence for the chief medical officer of health. We think that is another important step to take to ensure that we are standing on guard against these new kinds of diseases. We are vesting in the chief medical officer of health the authority to blow the whistle, to stand up and say to the government, "It's important that you take these steps." That did not exist in the past. We will do what is necessary to ensure that we can deal with these diseases.

1500

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): My question is for the Premier. I would like you to get your budget out and turn to page 12, because one look at page 12 of your budget makes me very worried. You've lumped the environment in with what you call other ministries that have their spending slashed by 12% next year. That's \$36 million less to fight for clean water and clean air, and it also breaks your promise to protect the environment. Why are you slashing the budget of the Ministry of the Environment?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): Minister of the Environment.

Hon Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment): I'm very happy to have this opportunity to correct the presentation that has been made in terms of this government and its lack of commitment to the environment. Quite the opposite: We are very committed to the environment.

If you look at the capital commitments for the Ministry of the Environment, I'm happy to explain that last year there were capital monies set aside that were not spent. This year, the ministry believes that we're going to move forward, but the amount that was previously budgeted is not what we will require, and that's what is reflected in this document.

Ms Churley: We're talking about the operating budget here. You are cutting it, starting in next year's budget, by 12%. You are hoping that we didn't, and others won't, read the fine print; I have. They will notice when you start laying off drinking water inspectors whom you announced a few months ago. They'll notice if you lay off scientists instead of hiring new ones. They'll notice that you've started to act just like Mike Harris, who slashed the ministry budget, but we all know that the road of environmental budget cuts leads to Walkerton.

Premier, I'm going to come back to you and ask, if you aren't going to cut water inspectors, what other environmental programs will you cut to meet your 12% target?

Hon Mrs Dombrowsky: The overall budget for the Ministry of the Environment has increased from \$285 million to \$317.4 million. That is an 11.2% increase.

With respect to the member's comments that we should know what cuts to the environment bring us, I would suggest that the NDP would know that very well because in 1993 the NDP cut the environment by \$44 million. In 1994, the NDP cut the Ministry of the Environment by \$212 million. In 1995, the NDP cut the Ministry of the Environment by \$220 million. This government is spending more at the Ministry of the Environment than has been spent there in 10 years.

Ms Churley: I would expect that the Minister of the Environment would have looked a little bit more closely at the fine print and discovered that the NDP took \$200 million out of the Ministry of the Environment and put it into the Clean Water Agency. We in fact invested more money in the Ministry of the Environment to protect our water than any other government before. She should know better.

Yesterday you made a big deal of your smog announcement. You made a big deal of getting tough with industrial polluters, but tougher standards mean little if there aren't the people to enforce them—and we know that, don't we, Minister? It gives you a nice announcement but little in the way of cleaner air. You're going to end up depending on industry to voluntarily comply with your standards. Why are you saying you're getting tough with industrial polluters on the one hand while cutting enforcement with the other?

Hon Leona Dombrowsky: I'm very happy to remind the member opposite that in eight months, this government has hired water inspectors. This government has stopped the Adams mine. This government has placed strong limits on pollution. I am proud that this government is investing in our environment. We are investing in clean water and implementing all of O'Connor's recommendations. We are investing in source water protection. We are investing and ensuring that we are taking a leading role in waste diversion. We are committed to closing coal-fired generation so that people in this province have cleaner air.

This government is very committed to the environment. I'm proud of how we are investing the resources of this province.

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TEACHERS

Mr Jim Flaherty (Whitby-Ajax): My question is for the Premier. Yesterday I raised in this place the issue of a teacher suspended for inappropriate letters and so on with a 13-year-old boy in Barrie who's back volunteering in a public school in Barrie.

I want to raise the larger question today about the discipline function of the Ontario College of Teachers. Your Minister of Education is quoted as saying that he wants to change the rules to make a majority of teachers on the board.

Teachers are already a majority on the board of the Ontario College of Teachers, Premier, as I'm sure you know. What your minister apparently means is that unionized teachers should be the majority on the board of the Ontario College of Teachers, which raises the larger question about the discipline function and the governance function of the Ontario College of Teachers as opposed to the advocacy function. I'm sure you understand the difference. The former chair, Joe Atkinson, says, "A proposal to increase teacher representation would put teacher unions in charge of policing their own members." Will you assure parents and students in Ontario that you will not take that step?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I'm not sure there is anybody more adept in this Legislature when it comes to driving in a wedge and trying to separate people. Here he wants to pick one of his favourite fights, with Ontario teachers. We're bringing in a different approach. In fact, when it comes to the Ontario College of Teachers, what we are determined to do is ensure that, yes, the representation there is constituted by a majority of teachers, but we want to ensure that there's a strong divide between the federation, the teachers' union, and classroom teachers. We are determined to ensure that those people who are sitting on the boards are not connected with federations, but rather are assuming their responsibility to act as a regulatory and disciplinary body on behalf of Ontario teachers. What we're doing in fact is the very opposite of what the member suggests, and we're doing it in a way that is reasonable and responsible.

Mr Flaherty: I'm sure it has nothing to do with the financial support for the Liberal Party from the Elementary Teachers' Federation, the Toronto Catholic teachers, the Ontario English Catholic teachers, the OSSTF, all in the last election campaign. You're a lawyer, Premier, and you know that someone accused of an offence should not have his or her lawyer paid for by the union, the judge be the union and the prosecution be the union. Even you understand that that's wrong, that it violates the basic principles of fundamental justice in Canada and in Ontario. Assure the people of Ontario that you will not do that. The Ontario College of Teachers is there to protect parents and students, not to protect union leaders. Please assure the people that you won't take that step.

Hon Mr McGuinty: I've got some very disappointing news for the member. I have provided that assurance time and time again. It will pull out from under him a

plank he loves to stand on and create havoc from. We believe, and let me be perfectly clear about this, the Ontario College of Teachers, like every other disciplinary body, should not be populated by federations or unions. We want classroom teachers sitting there charged with upholding the public interest and whose responsibility it is to ensure they're not there to represent the federation or the unions but rather to uphold the public interest and high teaching standards. That's our position with respect to the college, notwithstanding the member's indications to the contrary.

HYDRO RATES

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I have a question to the Premier. Last fall, you said you were going to take the politics out of setting hydro rates. You passed a bill that gave the Ontario Energy Board the right to set hydro rates no later than April 30 next year. But we've learned that you are giving yourself the right to hide the cost of your new, privatized hydro scheme until after the next election. Your new bill, tabled last week, allows the cabinet to set rates until some future date that the cabinet will determine by regulation. Why are you breaking your promise to take the politics out of setting hydro rates?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I know the Minister of Energy looks forward to speaking to this.

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): That's pure fiction. Bill 4 contained exactly the same privilege. The Ontario Energy Board is on course for having the regulatory framework in place by April 2005.

Ms Churley: I suggest that you take out a copy of your own regulation. I have it right here. I can read; I can understand it. I'll tell you why you're doing it. You know your new, private electricity contracts are going to drive costs through the roof but you're afraid that an unbiased board will pass that on to the consumers, which would hurt your re-election chances, which are already severely undermined. So you're now pulling an Ernie Eves and you're trying to hide the true costs before the next election, and then plan to dump them on the consumers after the election is over. Premier, will you amend your hydro bill to remove your ability to manipulate hydro rates? Will you keep your promise?

1510

Interjection: Show some respect for Ernie.

Hon Mr Duncan: She should show some respect to Mr Eves, the former Premier of Ontario.

The member is just passing on fiction. She's right about the regulation.

Now let's talk about credibility and price fixing in electricity. Her government fixed electricity prices 43% higher in the first three years of their term. That's electricity price fixing.

Let's talk about their other credibility gap. I call it the Howard Hampton credibility gap. In their 2003 platform

they said they'd close the coal-fired plants by 2007, and then on CBC Radio your leader said, "It's just not realistic." We think it's realistic and we're going to do it. On the question of supply, they did nothing except cancel demand-side management, conservation programs.

That regulation was reflected in Bill 4. That is reflected in the legislation before this House. I look forward to debating the legislation at committee in the summertime, and I look forward to passing it to undo the mess that the NDP and Conservatives left in the electricity sector.

CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

Mrs Donna H. Cansfield (Etobicoke Centre): My question is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. On Friday, Michael Briere, the self-admitted killer of young Holly Jones, indicated that his crime had been motivated at least in part by surfing child pornography Web sites on the Internet.

We know that child pornography is a cancer that affects each and every community in this province, using innocent children to pose nude or to perform sexual acts for the camera and apparently also in some cases leading to crimes against other children.

Minister, can you please tell this House what measures the government is taking to address the problem of child pornography?

Hon Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services): I thank the member from Etobicoke Centre for her question. Let me begin by saying that the exploitation of children, by whatever means, is obviously appalling and unconscionable. This government is committed to making sure that police have the tools and resources they need to fight against the heinous crime of child exploitation.

The OPP has a special unit dedicated to investigating the criminal activity of child pornography. The OPP's child pornography section is the first such unit in Canada and is looked upon by other police services in Canada as a leader in investigating these types of crimes.

As you know, our government was pleased to announce yesterday that an additional \$1 million in funding will be flowed to the OPP's child pornography section to enhance its current budget of \$1.4 million. This underlines our government's strong commitment to addressing this very important issue. The additional funding will mean that the unit will be able to increase its number of detectives, acquire technology and specialized training, and enhance its Web site so that parents and children have prevention tools and information.

Mrs Cansfield: My supplementary is for Minister Bryant. Given Michael Briere's statement that his crime was motivated at least in part by his having surfed child porn sites on the Internet, what specifically is this government going to do to shut down these sites?

Hon Michael Bryant (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): I thank the member for Etobicoke

Centre for her question. It was a very chilling day last week. I think everybody understands that we've got to clean up our Internet superhighways so that we stop access to child pornography. This is horrible, horrible, horrible and extremely harmful stuff.

We have said that we are going to work with Internet service providers, and many of these industry leaders have come to the government and said, "We want to set a model for the world in terms of establishing protocols that will permit" these ISPs "to contact police officers so we can do what we need to do to shut down these sites."

We need to draw consumers into this fight across the land. I've spoken to the Attorney General for Manitoba in this regard with respect to Cybertip.ca in seeing how we can better use it in the province of Ontario.

We are going to do everything we can—province by province, nation by nation—to stop child pornography from being transmitted across the Internet.

GASOLINE TAX

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Minister, during the last election campaign you and many of your colleagues were travelling the province and committing to municipalities, rural municipalities as well as urban, that there would be a specific transfer of gasoline tax to help them with their transportation-related infrastructure. We now have had a budget. That budget document seems to be indicating that those rural municipalities that were promised and were expecting some of that gas tax transfer are now out of luck, because according to your budget documents, only transit will qualify for that transfer.

Minister, can you confirm for us here today that you are now breaking yet one more promise to the people of Ontario, or will you stand in your place and confirm that in fact some of that gasoline tax will go to municipalities that do not have transit?

Hon Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): I'm very, very pleased that our budget includes the gasoline tax for the municipalities. We have not determined exactly how we will allocate those, and we are going to consult the municipalities to do that, but this money is for transit purposes and that's what it will be allocated for.

Mr Klees: You will know that you have mail from municipalities, for example, like Halton Hills. They have asked you specifically to make a commitment, given that they do not have transit in their municipalities but they do have other transportation-related needs. Can I then have your confirmation in this House today that in response to municipalities like Halton Hills, and Halton Hills specifically, you will send them in writing a confirmation that they can expect a portion of that gasoline tax to go to their municipalities to support them and provide assistance with their transportation-related infrastructure? Will you stand today and very clearly give a commitment to this House that you will do that?

Hon Mr Takhar: I'm surprised that this member will even ask me this question. They never allocated any

money for the municipalities from the gasoline tax, but we have. We're going to work with the municipalities to make sure that gets done.

I also want to inform the member opposite that we also have other programs, which includes \$900 million that we will be allocating to the rural municipalities as well. I also want to tell the member that we are fulfilling our promise a year ahead of schedule.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): My question is to the Premier. Last fall, you went around this province during the election saying that you were going to lower auto insurance rates for the people of Ontario. I have yet another case; the phone calls are coming in every week. This case is of a young woman in Hearst who moved from the province of Quebec. She used to pay basically \$1,200 a year for a 1999 Mazda, came to Ontario, tried to buy auto insurance and was told it would be over \$4,000. Premier, will you admit that private auto insurance doesn't work and it's time for public auto in Ontario, as in Quebec?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs): The Minister of Finance.

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): The very first thing we did, having assumed the responsibilities of government, was to put a freeze on auto insurance rates, which had been going up year after year under the Conservative administration. Thereafter, we brought in a series of measures which I am proud to say are bringing down, for the first time in years, the cost of auto insurance. A 10% reduction is pretty much universal across a wide variety of companies. More than that, we're now involved in the second phase of auto insurance reform, which will have an even more powerful effect on lowering auto insurance premiums in this province.

1520

Mr Bisson: I've just got to say, both to the Premier and to the finance minister, some freeze. This woman has had her auto insurance go up by \$3,200. That ain't a freeze, no matter how you cut it.

What galls people is that if we look at the profits of the auto insurance company—500% over last year. So will you admit that auto insurance in Ontario is not working? People are being ripped off. We should go to public auto, as have Manitoba, Saskatchewan, British Columbia and Quebec.

Hon Mr Sorbara: Mr Speaker, you've been around here long enough to remember when public auto insurance was the rallying cry of the opposition NDP. You were around here when the NDP was actually voted into power, from 1990 to 1995. And you were around here when then Premier Bob Rae stood in this House and said, to paraphrase somewhat, "I made a mistake. Public auto insurance would not work in this province. It would cost thousands and thousands of jobs. It would not give Ontarians the kind of insurance they need."

His leader at that time admitted it. It is only because they're in opposition again now that they're undertaking

that same refrain. I'm proud of the fact that under our change in regulations, auto insurance premiums in Ontario are finally going down.

HIGH TECHNOLOGY SECTOR

Mrs Liz Sandals (Guelph-Wellington): My question is for the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. Minister, I would like to ask you about one of the fastest-growing sectors in our economy, the high-tech sector. In my riding of Guelph-Wellington, we have a number of high-tech businesses that are successful thanks to a positive economic climate which your ministry has helped create, and is continuing to foster.

However, I was reading in the Ottawa Business Journal yesterday about possible cuts to technology grant programs by Stephen Harper's federal Conservatives. Business and industry reps have expressed their worry about a Harper-led Conservative government and their policies. Will a strategy of reckless Mike Harris-style tax cuts help the Ontario economy and high-tech businesses?

Hon Joseph Cordiano (Minister of Economic Development and Trade): I thank the member for the question. It's obvious that the federal Conservatives do not understand Ontario or Ontario's economy. In the recent budget, we made announcements that we will be investing in key strategic areas for the economy: in health care, education, infrastructure, innovation and commercialization. For a stronger economy these are key investments.

Mr Harper's policies would jeopardize all that. He would have us in a race to the bottom for low-wage, low-skilled jobs. Those are the failed policies of the Mike Harris era, and we're not going there. We want high-paying jobs, high-value-added jobs. That's what this government is going to invest in. That's what we're all about.

Mrs Sandals: In the business journal article, high-tech leader Debbie Weinstein was quoted as saying, "[They're] just going to get rid of things ... without looking at the ... benefits they're creating to high-tech employment and commercialization."

I know that research and development, innovation and commercialization are important parts of our government's agenda for economic growth. These partnerships with the private sector have been shown to create excellent economic benefits, and some tremendous success stories.

The McGuinty government knows that information, invention and innovation are the new pillars of economic strength and success. Why is Mr Harper putting forward an economic policy that will be harmful to Ontario and put jobs of hard-working Ontarians at risk?

Hon Mr Cordiano: I'm very concerned about Mr Harper's policies and how they'll impact on Ontario's economy. We've worked very hard to forge a partnership with the Liberal federal government. Obviously, Mr Harper is not interested in investing in greater prosperity. He wants to put tax cuts ahead of investing in prosperity for the economy.

These are failed policies of the previous Conservative government in Ontario. I'm afraid that ideology would triumph over sound economic policies. That's a recipe for disaster. We want to invest, and we'll continue to invest, in innovation, in R&D and in commercialization. The faster we get ideas to market with products, the greater the number of high-paying jobs, the more value-added jobs. That's the kind of economy we want to build for Ontario.

I don't understand why the federal Conservatives don't get this, why they don't want to invest in Ontario. I think those are failed policies of the Mike Harris era, and the people of Ontario don't want to see a return to that.

ENERGY ISSUES

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): My question is for the Minister of Energy, but I see he's not here at the moment. Perhaps I'll direct it to the Premier. Premier, you must be familiar with your budget speech on page 23, and I'll read it here for you, if you wish. On page 23 there's a little chart that says, "Includes one-time revenue gain of \$3.9 billion related to the projected elimination of the liability for non-utility generator power purchase agreements in 2004-05."

Minister, I'd like you to explain this to the House. Where does the revenue of \$3.9 billion come from, or is it simply an additional burden on the taxpayers? What I'm understanding it to be, if I look at the question clearly, is that you increased the electricity rates—we understand that—in April, and I understand now that you're going to increase the electricity rates for the second time—another broken promise. Is this what I can read from this obscure comment on page 23 here?

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): No, we're not raising the price again. In fact, we're trying to deal with the \$1.8-billion mess you left on the province's books. You ought to be ashamed of yourself even asking the question.

We also cancelled all the contracts to the Tory friends at OPG and Ontario Hydro. Let me remind you, it was millions of dollars.

The non-utility generator contracts are electricity contracts. Liability for them will rest with ratepayers. This is consistent with our policy to have consumers pay the true cost of electricity. Our goal in doing this is to free up the money for health and education. These are the priorities that Premier McGuinty and Minister Sorbara put into the budget. We have to clean up the mess you left in health care, the mess you left in education and the mess, frankly, that you left at Ontario Hydro. It's not easy but we're doing it, and we're going to make sure the legacy you left is wiped out and fixed once and for all.

Mr O'Toole: Some of what you're saying, that this liability rests with the ratepayers, that's just what the point was. It's really another rate increase. The people of Ontario should be prepared for a second whack on this issue.

Minister, I'm going to change to a slightly different area in the energy file. I would like to say that your commitment to closing the five coal-fired plants is a laudable objective. I completely support it.

Interjections.

Mr O'Toole: Let's pay close attention. However, it's another Liberal promise, so you must be a bit concerned when not one expert in the industry believes you. Check the papers. Read the newspapers. Listen to the experts. There's not one who believes you. I'll put it to you simply, Minister: Would you resign if you fail to shut down any one of the five coal-fired plants? Will you put your resignation and your promise on the table here today, or is it just another broken promise?

Hon Mr Duncan: No, I won't resign on that, number one. But what I will do, and we'll be outlining this: I don't know what experts you're listening to, but the people of Ontario expect us to move on that commitment and to help clean up air quality.

Let's talk about what the Ontario Medical Association has said in terms of lives lost as a result of smog and air pollutants. Unlike you, we're not going to give up. We've set an ambitious target and we're going to move heaven and earth to achieve it.

Let me tell you something else about that government. That is the government that said it would lower prices, and when they put their policy in place, prices skyrocketed in an unprecedented fashion, to the point where the government of the day had to then put a cap on price that was paid for by the taxpayers of this province to the tune of \$1.8 billion.

We're moving quickly to clean up the mess that government left in the energy sector, and we've set ambitious targets on coal. We will move heaven and earth to achieve them.

1530

COMMUNITY-BASED MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): This is a question to the Minister of Community and Social Services. Madam Minister, this is a non-partisan issue, so I want you to listen carefully to this. I have a constituent who has a psychiatric disability. He was found penniless, filthy, disoriented in a public park. The police brought him to the doctor, brought him to the social worker, and they found him a home in a retirement home, for which he gets \$930 a month. That \$930 has now been removed by your department. They say he can't have it because he gets his meals there and that he is no longer eligible to remain. The staff in your department are refusing to intervene unless there is an order in council. That is up to you. That's what you do. If I give you the documentation here today, will you intervene? Will you stop that man from going back to being penniless, disoriented and filthy in a public park?

Hon Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): I appreciate the member's concern over a con-

stituent of his. I'd be very happy to look at that file. I'm not aware of the kinds of rules that are prescribed for this particular case. I'm very happy to see whether or not the right rules were applied. I can tell you that, generally, as you know, this government is moving forward to help people who really do need help. Based on the information you've provided to this House, it certainly seems like this is one of those such cases, and I would be happy to look at this.

Mr Prue: Madam Minister, the regulations that are in place are very bad regulations. I'm not saying that you put them there, but they're very bad, because this is not the lone individual who is seeing this. This is a very bad decision for this constituent. It's bad for the taxpayers, because if we remove him from the nursing home, then he is eligible again for the \$930, although he has no way to spend it, because he doesn't have the wherewithal to do the right things. And it is bad for the thousands of people like him, who are caught in the same bind.

So what we are asking you to do, quite simply, is not only to look at this constituent, but what we need you to do is to look at the whole situation where a person is removed from the nursing home and goes to a hospital at \$430 a day versus \$930 a month. That's \$13,000 a month versus \$1,000 a month; that's 13 times the money.

The general policy decision—these people are marginalized and they're at risk, they're psychiatrically disabled. We need new rules. Not only will you help this man, but will you look at the rules that are putting him there?

Hon Ms Papatello: I know this member will be very pleased to have heard that our parliamentary assistant for this ministry, Deb Matthews, has already instituted a review. We've included many, many people, groups, agencies and recipients in this review of the system. Neither you nor I is pleased with how Ontario Works or the disability support is being delivered, because there are rules that simply don't make sense in many cases. I agree with that. We are looking at those rules.

You'll also note that some of these issues go beyond community and social services. All of us in this House are pleased to see the kind of investments in this current budget around community mental health.

In your particular case, it sounds as though those are the kinds of initiatives we need to address, the right solutions to these people at the right time, so that they are in the right place, not only to get care, a roof over their heads, but also the kind of supportive living that means they can live in the community where that's possible, and we provide the right supports. I am happy to look at this case, and I know that you will help us, too, in this review, to see that we are applying fair and equitable rules to truly help people.

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

Mr Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East): My question is for the Minister of Energy. Some of the greatest challenges our government faces are those in the electricity

sector. Years of mismanagement and inaction by the previous two governments have made the need for change and decisive action even more urgent. On April 15, you outlined some of the government's plans for change in this sector. Minister, with the legislation that you have introduced in this House, how is our government ensuring this sector is put back on solid footing after years of Tory neglect?

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): What we know for certain is that if we had continued on the same path, we would not be able to power the growth in our economy that's coming forward. Our electricity sector would have ceased to be the great enabler that it's been throughout most of Ontario's history.

We are putting Ontario back on a solid footing by taking a balanced approach.

First of all, we lifted the cap.

Second, we've now introduced legislation that will redefine the sector, and it provides for public ownership, provides for a new Ontario Power Authority and provides for a new Ontario conservation bureau.

These initiatives, wrapped up with the Premier's commitment on conservation, wrapped up with the Premier's commitment to close the coal-fired plants in this province, represent a dramatic shift that will provide price stability and reliability of electricity and help the sector become the great strength it was once before. That vision is laid out by the Premier and is incorporated in our first bill, and we believe that at the end of four years prices will be stable, supply will be stable and the people of Ontario will be far better served by their electricity sector.

Mr Fonseca: Minister, as you outlined in your statement to this House, the legislation, much like the operation of the sector, is complex. You discussed an enhanced Ontario Energy Board. Furthermore, you mentioned the creation of the Ontario Power Authority, which would be responsible for procuring new supply, transmission and demand-management initiatives, either by competition or by contract. The power authority would assess adequacy and the reliability of electricity resources and forecast future demand. It would also prepare an integrated system plan for generation, transmission and conservation, to be reviewed by the Ontario Energy Board. You also spoke about the conservation bureau and the Independent Electricity System Operator. Minister, how will these organizations help us with supply, conservation and reliability in the sector?

Hon Mr Duncan: Under our proposed changes, the Ontario Energy Board will continue to have a strong role in protecting consumers through licensing and rate regulation. They would ensure the economic efficiency, cost effectiveness and financial viability of the various elements of Ontario's electricity system.

Consumer protection is a hallmark of our energy policy. The conservation bureau, as part of the Ontario Power Authority, will help us build a true conservation

culture. As Premier McGuinty has clearly stated, conservation must be a cornerstone of Ontario's long-term energy future.

With the bill before the House today, we are looking beyond the next four, eight and 12 years to ensure a reliable, sustainable and diverse supply of power at stable, competitive prices for generations to come. We're taking action, because the McGuinty government recognizes that the health of this sector is vital to ensuring Ontario's economic prosperity.

USER FEES

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): My question is for the Premier. Premier, although you've stated that your budget has been well received, I can tell you that the federal Liberal candidates in Oshawa aren't smiling. But, Mr Premier, the gift of taking doesn't end with the announcements that you've already made. The worst may be yet to come. You see, Premier, in your budget on page 124, the last paragraph lists other fees and charges. It states on page 125, "... other smaller fee changes, will be provided by individual ministries responsible, once arrangements and details are finalized."

Premier, the House is about to rise. Once it has risen, we won't have the opportunity to question you on these new tax increases. Can you, according to your budget, tell us what these new tax increases are going to be?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): To the Minister of Finance, Speaker.

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): Virtually all additional fees and charges were itemized in the budget, a number of them applying to courtroom fees. The reinstatement of a suspended driver's licence, for example, is up significantly. Others are very modest indeed and will have virtually no impact. I want to tell my friend that he should not be holding his breath during the summer for additional announcements. Virtually all additional fees and levies have been itemized in the budget.

Mr Ouellette: Clearly it states that other small fee changes will be provided by the individual ministries. I wasn't really anticipating an exact ministry breakdown. But according to page 124, "... ministries brought forward proposals that more closely link the cost of ... service and the associated benefits received."

Minister, can you at least let us know which ministries brought these proposals forward so we can anticipate—at least your caucus members can anticipate what calls they're going to receive through the summer?

Hon Mr Sorbara: Sir, one of the things that was, I think, most gratifying during the budget-making process was how hard individual ministers and ministries worked to re-examine what was going on in their ministries and to make the shift, which is discussed in the budget, to results-based budgeting; in other words, looking for areas where we were achieving the results that we want and placing resources there, and finding other areas where we

were simply spending money but not achieving the results that are within the priorities of this government. That process, budgeting for results, will characterize everything we do from here on throughout the life of this administration.

I want to repeat to my friend that he ought not to be expecting additional fees and levies. They are itemized here in the budget. They're the result of the kind of work that every single minister went through in helping to prepare this budget, and we're all very proud of that work.

1540

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Ms Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): My question is to the Premier in the absence of the Minister of Education. I had the occasion to attend a meeting last night in the riding of Hamilton East in the community of Rosedale. The meeting included hundreds of neighbours, parents and students of a Catholic elementary school called St Christopher. The parents were stunned to learn that the separate school board is, in fact, contemplating the closure of their school. They feel betrayed. They believe that the government has broken its promise for a moratorium on the closure of schools. I ask the Premier, will you commit to ensuring St Christopher is not closed?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I'm sure the member will recognize that we have made a significant investment through our budget and our four-year plan in public education. Instead of investing money in private education, as the previous government wanted to do, we are investing in our public schools—\$2.6 billion into our schools over the course of our mandate. We are determined to have lower class sizes, to hire at least 1,000 new teachers and to train lead teachers for literacy and numeracy in each and every one of our elementary schools.

Ms Horwath: The minister can make all the announcements he wants, and the Premier can reinforce those announcements here in the Legislature but, quite frankly, the bottom line is that schools like St Christopher are often the glue that holds neighbourhoods together. In fact, this school was described by the parents and the neighbours of this community as a Shangri-La in the neighbourhood. Will you guarantee, I ask once again to the Premier, that St Christopher will remain open and continue to be a Shangri-La for that community?

Hon Mr McGuinty: Certainly I can well understand the respect and affection and feeling that parents develop for a local school. I know that the Minister of Education is working hard, not only with individuals within the ministry, but with all those who are committed to public education, including those at our school boards, to develop a better funding formula that recognizes the value that people attach to their local schools.

We have put in place a moratorium. We've asked school boards to honour that moratorium as we work hard to develop a better funding formula. But at the end

of the day, that decision rests with the local school boards. What we're doing is urging the school board, and school boards throughout the province, to put those decisions in abeyance while we revise the funding formula and draft a funding formula that is better suited to ensuring that we recognize the value of our local schools.

PETITIONS

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Re support for chiropractic services in Ontario health insurance plan ...

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province."

It's signed by a considerable number of my constituents, and I have affixed my signature to it as well.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): I ask members to leave quietly, as we have a rotation of petitions. The member from Etobicoke North.

Mr Shafiq Qaadri (Etobicoke North): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need;

"Those with reduced ability to pay—including seniors, low-income families and the working poor—will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments;

"Elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

"There was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province," and especially for the MPP from Durham.

I present this to our page, Ian, for presentation to you.

The Speaker: Petitions? I have to give it to the leader of the official opposition.

Mr Ernie Eves (Leader of the Opposition): I am pleased to present to the House a petition signed by 2,600

Ontarians, many of whom are constituents of Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey, requesting that the government reverse the short-sighted and ill-advised decision to eliminate OHIP funding for chiropractic services, and I am pleased to affix my signature thereto.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario signed by hundreds.

"Whereas, since Bill 99 was passed in 1997 by the Harris government, the situation for injured workers with respect to income, recognition of their injuries by the compensation system, treatment by the employer and opportunities for re-employment has dramatically deteriorated; and

"Whereas employers have more power today to frustrate and intimidate injured workers and are less accountable for their actions; and

"Whereas employers are increasingly putting greater effort into avoiding reporting of claims and associated costs than into preventing injuries; and

"Whereas the compensation system is increasingly more concerned about minimizing costs for employers than ensuring full compensation for workers; and

"Whereas it is the responsibility of the provincial government to ensure fair and adequate compensation for workers and to ensure healthy and safe workplaces;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To direct the provincial government to immediately: change the name of the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board back to the Workers' Compensation Board; implement full cost-of-living protection for injured workers; establish full coverage for all workers and all work-related disabilities and diseases under the compensation system; abolish experience rating, which encourages employers to, and rewards them for, hiding occupational injury and illness by giving them money back from their premiums; enforce health and safety in the workplace by hiring more inspectors and sending them to workplaces; enforce employer re-employment obligations and abolish provisions which deem workers to be receiving wages from jobs they don't have; and conduct a complete review of the workers' compensation system in order to write new legislation which ensures fundamental benefits and rights for workers, including survivors of workers killed on the job, as called for in the CAW 'jobs or full compensation' platform."

HIGHWAY 44

Mr Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the province no longer maintains Highway 44 linking the town of Almonte to Highway 417 and the provincial highway system and, in addition, has not installed nighttime lighting of any kind at the exit number 155 interchange;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the provincial government petition the city of Ottawa to change the name of the former Highway 44 from March Road to Almonte Road from exit 155 to Highway 417 to the city boundary with the town of Mississippi Mills; and

"That the provincial government install suitable nighttime lighting at interchange 155 on Highway 417."

I've signed it.

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Ms Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): I was very graciously provided this petition that was collected by Doctors Roberta Koch and Ira Acetti, who are doctors of chiropractic in the area of Hamilton East.

The petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario regarding "support for chiropractic services in Ontario health insurance plan:

"Whereas elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need;

"Those with reduced ability to pay—including seniors, low-income families and the working poor—will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments;

"Elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to the government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

"There was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, health care system, government and the province."

I'm pleased to forward this petition and affix my signature thereon.

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario for support for chiropractic services in the Ontario health insurance plan.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province."

OPTOMETRISTS

Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington): "Whereas the last funding agreement between the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and the Ontario Association of Optometrists expired on March 31, 2000;

"Whereas the optometric fees for OHIP-insured services remain unchanged since 1989; and

"Whereas fees for OHIP services do not provide for fair or reasonable compensation for the professional services of optometrists in that they no longer cover the costs of providing eye examinations; and

"Whereas it is in the best interests of patients and the government to have a new funding agreement for insured services that will ensure that the most vulnerable members of society are able to receive the eye care they need;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care resume negotiations immediately with the OAO and appoint a mediator to help with the negotiation process in order to ensure that the optometrists can continue to provide quality eye care services to patients in Ontario."

It has my signature of support.

1550

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Re support for chiropractic services in Ontario health insurance plan:

"Whereas elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic care will no longer be able to access the health care they need; and

"Those with reduced ability to pay—including seniors, low-income families and the working poor—will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments; and

"Elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to the government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

"There was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province."

I deliver this petition on behalf of my constituents in Peterborough.

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I have here a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Re support for chiropractic services in Ontario health insurance plan:

"Whereas elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need;

"Those with reduced ability to pay—including seniors, low-income families and the working poor—will be

forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments;

"Elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

"There was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province."

I affix my signature as I totally agree with this petition.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the government of Ontario introduced public policy in 1973 ... that recommended that people with intellectual disability be socially integrated within their local communities and with other citizens; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario recommitted itself to that public policy in 1987 ... and stated that Ontario will phase out institutional placements for all people with intellectual disabilities; and

"Whereas all three political parties in the province have endorsed this public policy and supported community living for people with intellectual disabilities;... and

"Whereas the government of Ontario has made no effort since March 31, 2000, to move any people out of these institutions...;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"(a) introduce a plan to provide community living opportunities for the almost 1,100 people who continue to reside in the province's institutions for people with intellectual disabilities; and

(b) close these three remaining institutions in Ontario...; and

(c) accomplish these goals within a three-year time frame (April 1, 2004-March 31, 2007)."

This is signed by thousands. I want to pass this to my page from Thunder Bay, Brendan Hamilton, who goes to Algonquin school—a great young man. Good to have you here, Brendan.

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Mr Jim Flaherty (Whitby-Ajax): This petition is from people in the community in Chapleau. They are concerned.

"Whereas our community has spent generations building an ideal community based on religious, culture and language differences;

"Whereas our small community's heritage is at stake;

"Whereas we request a higher level of co-operation that our students will not be separated;

"We petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to halt the construction of a new French separate high school in the community of Chapleau."

Obviously they're concerned with the education policy and construction in their community. I present this petition on their behalf, at their request.

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): Along with the other petitions I have tabled, I would like to bring the voice of my community to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need;

"Those with reduced ability to pay—including seniors, low-income families and the working poor—will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments;

"Elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

"There was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province."

I affix my signature to this petition.

Mrs Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): I have here about 1,200 names.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province."

I affix my signature.

DISTRICT OF MUSKOKA

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I have more petitions to keep Muskoka part of northern Ontario, bringing the total to over 8,000.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the district of Muskoka is currently designated as part of northern Ontario; and

"Whereas the geography and socio-economic conditions of Muskoka are very similar to the rest of northern Ontario; and

"Whereas the median family income in the district of Muskoka is \$10,000 below the provincial average and \$6,000 below the median family income for greater Sudbury; and

"Whereas removing the district of Muskoka from northern Ontario would adversely affect the hard-working people of Muskoka by restricting access to programs and incentives enjoyed by residents of other northern communities; and

"Whereas the residents of Muskoka should not be confused with those who cottage or vacation in the district; and

"Whereas the federal government of Canada recognizes the district of Muskoka as part of the north; and

"Whereas this is a mean-spirited and politically motivated decision on the part of the McGuinty government;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government maintain the current definition of northern Ontario for the purposes of government policy and program delivery."

I support this petition and affix my signature.

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Mr Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): I've got a petition signed by approximately 300 constituents in Oakville. The intent of the petition, which I'm tabling today, is quite simple: They would like us to maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services.

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Mrs Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): I have here about 1,300 names to the Legislative Assembly.

"The patients of schedule 5 physiotherapy clinics request the continued support of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario for provision of OHIP-covered physiotherapy treatment to qualified seniors and others in need of these vital health care procedures."

I affix my signature.

TAXATION

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to do with taxpayer protection.

"Whereas the McGuinty government's 2004 budget will break the taxpayer protection law by not conducting a referendum on tax increases; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty signed an election pledge on September 11, 2003, not to raise taxes without the explicit consent of voters through a referendum; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty promised in TV ads not to raise taxes by one penny on working families; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty pledged in writing to obey the taxpayer protection law, which requires a referendum before increasing taxes;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To ensure that all of the McGuinty government's tax increases are put before the people of Ontario in a referendum."

I support this petition and affix my signature to it.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS AMENDMENT ACT (HOURS OF WORK AND OTHER MATTERS), 2004 LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES NORMES D'EMPLOI (HEURES DE TRAVAIL ET AUTRES QUESTIONS)

Resuming the debate adjourned on June 17, 2004, on the motion for second reading of Bill 63, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 with respect to hours of work and certain other matters / Projet de loi 63, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi en ce qui concerne les heures de travail et d'autres questions.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Further debate?

Ms Laurel C. Broten (Etobicoke-Lakeshore): I'm very pleased to stand today in support of Bill 63, which, if passed, will end the 60-hour workweek. I'll be sharing my time with my colleague the member from Markham.

This proposed legislation is a response to a commitment our government made to end the 60-hour workweek that was introduced by the previous government. It's a commitment to bring back balance to our lives—each of our lives, I guess—and to those workers in communities who maybe are being asked to work more than they want to.

1600

With this legislation, we'll be restoring workers' rights to make the decision, for them to choose whether or not they work more than 48 hours a week. This will allow us, as a community, to prosper. It will be for the well-being of our province, as well as the well-being of the workers in our province.

I want to spend a couple minutes talking about how we got here. A fundamental protection existed in our province for many, many years, where workers were allowed to choose whether or not they worked more than 48 hours a week. This fundamental protection existed for decades, as the Ministry of Labour had approval of hours of work over 48 hours a week. That layer of added protection allowing people to feel safe and secure in their workplaces was removed by the former government without regard to how vulnerable workers would feel when they were seeking to assert their rights.

As a result of the previous government's legislation, some employees over the last number of years have felt too worried, too nervous, too coerced by their employer—and the power that their employer has over them—to say no to an employer's request to work those 60 hours a week. So at present, there's no government oversight to support an employee's decision.

At its heart, that's what this legislation is about. It's an opportunity to have the government play an overseeing role, a supervising role in some capacity, to ensure that there's a balance of interests between employees and employers in requests for folks to work longer hours.

I know over the past days of debate we've heard some folks talk about how this will be bad for business. I want to respond emphatically that this will not be bad for business. This is an opportunity to make sure that we balance the rights of employers and employees and make sure that we have a fair playing field for workers in our communities.

The benefits to employers are important, in that this bill is part of a comprehensive strategy to bring about real changes in our employment standards in the province. That will benefit all of our workplaces. Better workplaces are better for workers and better for business and jobs, creating prosperity in our province.

We're also going to make it as easy as we can for employers to get the government oversight and the government supervision for this request, if a request is made, for an employee to work those longer hours. We want to make sure that Ontario employers can compete across the world, that we don't impose added burdens on them in their workplaces and that, as a counterbalance, we also have a level playing field for all of our employees and our employers.

So we're making it as easy as possible. Businesses are going to be able to file on-line, by fax, by mail or in person. We are going to ensure that the Ministry of Labour responds in a timely fashion to those requests. Most approvals, so that we don't have an added amount of red tape for our communities, will be for up to three years. So it won't be on an ordinary basis that employees will be asked to work. It's not like something we're going to be doing every week. We're going to be saying, "Can you bring forward this and make sure that there are protections in place?" We're going to have simple forms and easy-to-use information. There won't be any fees associated with it. Also importantly, if this legislation is passed, we're going to have a transition period so that employers have some time to get ministry approval before the law comes into effect.

I think those are very particular things that we need to talk about: how we will implement this type of legislation so that we do acknowledge that there is a need to make sure that employers are successful in this province, because people need jobs. People need to have good jobs. They also need to have a balanced life, with the ability to make the decision themselves as to whether they will be working those extra hours.

In terms of the benefits for society as a whole, we have to look at the fact that estimates put direct costs of

absenteeism in the Canadian workplace due to high work-life conflict at between \$3 billion and \$5 billion a year. So anything that a government can do to make sure we diffuse that workplace stress and reduce the direct costs of absenteeism will, at the end of the day, benefit our society and will benefit the financial ability of our society as well, because we won't have the added costs of absenteeism.

It's not as simple as counting up the dollars and the amount of absenteeism there is when we talk about a piece of legislation like this—\$3 billion to \$5 billion. That's a significant number. But more importantly, we need to talk about the real cost, for example, when you're talking about the cost of these consequences on a family, on a parent, on a mother or father who's being asked to work those longer hours, who is perhaps a new immigrant to this country who doesn't feel secure in their job and is concerned about taking advantage of a right they have to simply say, "No, I don't want to work those extra hours."

This level of protection makes sure that the rights you have can be taken advantage of. The long-held saying is that if you can't exercise a right, you don't have a right at all. That's really what this legislation is about. It's a practical piece of legislation to make sure that people have the ability to exercise the rights they have. We want to make sure you are not being coerced, not feeling under pressure to accept working longer hours when you really want to be at home, perhaps with your family. We want to make sure the choice is real.

I also want to talk a little bit more about the balancing issues that this legislation is part of. It's part of a comprehensive package of revising the way we deal with employee-employer relationships in this province. It's part of an overall strategy. We're going to increase awareness, outreach and enforcement strategies to make sure we protect our employees across this province, especially vulnerable employees, when it comes to hours of work. We're also going to make sure that workers have the information they need to exercise the rights they've been given.

The Ministry of Labour is also undertaking a number of other initiatives that will help to make sure we have balance in our workplaces. They are looking to make sure we have a renewed Workplace Safety and Insurance Board, bringing back balance to our workplaces across the province. We are also establishing a minister's action group to move quickly on some serious employment standards issues. Those will make sure we have balance in our workplaces across this province, making sure that in workplaces in specific areas like mining safety we protect our various workforces across the province.

If you've grown up in a generation like mine and you haven't been at the front of battles, making sure our workplaces were safe, making sure our workplaces were balanced, sometimes we forget the battles that have been fought over many decades and many generations to ensure that our places of work were safe, that our places of work were balanced. Those battles were hard fought

over many decades and many years to make sure that individuals were not asked to work in unsafe conditions, that people were allowed to balance their lives with their family lives, that we weren't asking people to work in conditions none of us would want to work in.

We can think back to a time and a place in this province when those rights weren't there. They weren't on paper and they certainly didn't exist in any fashion. We can all think, I'm sure, of stories our grandparents have told us about the conditions they were asked to work in, in mines, in factories—

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'm disturbed the government does not assume this bill is important enough to listen to. I don't believe we have a quorum in the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Ted Arnott): Would the table staff attempt to ascertain if there is a quorum.

Deputy Clerk (Ms Deborah Deller): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Deputy Clerk: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore.

Ms Broten: I'm pleased to wrap up and talk about why this legislation is so important. There are many of us who I know want to ensure the rights of those in our community, the workers in Etobicoke-Lakeshore, who will be working along with employers who will benefit from this as well, who will make sure that their employees are happy, safe and comfortable, and that this legislation will bring back the necessary balance in workplaces across this province.

1610

Mr Tony C. Wong (Markham): I want to start by saying that it's a delight to rise to speak to Bill 63. We certainly want to restore a worker's right to choose whether or not to work for more than 48 hours in a week. Now, of course, the attention that we pay to see that the well-being of every worker in this province is attended to, to attend to the well-being of the workers and residents of Ontario, is fundamental to this bill, and it is the underpinning of the bill itself.

Now that I have a bit more time to speak to this bill, I want to start by talking about what's happening in my riding of Markham, the high-tech capital of Canada. We have been fortunate enough to be able to build this cluster of high-tech companies in this lovely town of Markham, which has also earned the Prince of Wales award with respect to its protection of environmental initiatives. We have over 1,000 high-tech companies in Markham, including the headquarters of IBM, ATI, Geac, Sun Microsystems, Lucent Technologies etc. It's not easy for these high-tech companies to compete with a very rigid work schedule, and I've alluded to that previously.

I want to give you an example of what we have been able to achieve as the high-tech capital. I go back to 1998, when Mayor Don Cousens, a former member of this House, and I led a business delegation to Beijing,

China. We met with officials there, including officials of the science park called Zhongguancun, the counterpart of Silicon Valley, in China. It's a long process. We've been working with them—and they've come back a couple of times—for five years.

Actually, it wasn't until 2001, when they sent a delegation back to express an interest in an additional higher level of interaction and representation in Canada. In 2002, the deputy mayor of Beijing visited Markham. He is the deputy mayor in charge of the science park. He indicated that, yes, they were looking for a North American representative office. This is actually the fourth one that they were looking for. They had the first one in San Jose; the second one in Tokyo, Japan; the third one in Amsterdam; and they were looking for an additional one in North America.

Now, it's too bad they did not pick Ottawa, but as a result of our persistent and enthusiastic efforts, we went back a month after the deputy mayor from Beijing visited Markham and sealed that contract. I know that some members in the House are not as happy as I am, but I was perfectly happy when they finally decided to pick Markham as the fourth representative office internationally.

I say this because it is important for our workers, many of them ICT specialists, to be able to work around the clock, especially when you interact with professionals in Asia-Pacific. You have to work late hours and often-times odd hours. So whether it be 48 hours a week or 40 hours a week, it's not going to work. That's not going to cut it, because they may need to work extremely long hours during the week, when they are under pressure to produce results, so that they can communicate with folks in Asia Pacific. This is one aspect where the bill is important for the high-tech specialists and workers in Markham.

I want to give you another example. We in Markham were able to get the IBM software research lab. That is really an extremely important company for us. Although IBM Canada has been headquartered in Markham for more than 25 years, when they were looking for a city to put in place their software research lab, they were looking at a number of countries. There were three countries that they had finally decided on. Canada fought hard to bring them here. Within Canada, they also were looking at three cities, and Markham was fortunate enough to be able to bring them on board.

This is a high-tech research company that will be hiring 5,000 professionals, two thirds of whom will be PhDs. At this time, I understand they have hired about 3,000 people. I say this because when you talk to research specialists, especially in the high-tech area, they do not adhere to a regular 9 to 5 schedule, so you have to have that flexibility. I'm giving you these two examples because I want to emphasize that for high-tech research as well as commercial enterprises, flexibility is of the essence.

What are the options? The status quo? No. We know the status quo is not going to work because the Ministry of Labour staff consulted with over 30 key labour,

industry and employee advocacy groups on how to regulate hours of work. During these consultations, they were told, number one, that the absence of ministry oversight for hours of work beyond 48 in a week has left employees feeling they have no real choice. That is why we've been talking about what constitutes a genuine choice. They've also been told by the employers that without enforcement there would not be a level playing field. So the status quo is not satisfactory.

What about limiting it to 48 hours, period—no overtime? I've said before that that's not going to work either, because a lot of times high-tech personnel especially have to be able to work long hours for maybe a short period of time to deliver the results they're expected to deliver. So that's not good either.

Bill 63 strikes a good balance. That is why I think ministry oversight and requiring an employer to apply for employees to work over 48 hours is the answer.

I will talk briefly about the impact of Bill 63 on immigrants, especially new immigrants. The member from Etobicoke-Lakeshore, as well as the member from Etobicoke North, has alluded to this aspect. This is very important, because what this bill is about is protecting the most vulnerable. Why are they the most vulnerable? Because oftentimes they have a language barrier. Whether these immigrants have come from China or South Asia, they may not be totally conversant in English or French.

In addition, contrary to public belief, many of them are actually of very meagre means financially. I've heard comments such as, "Oh, these rich people coming in from Hong Kong don't need to work; they don't need to do anything." I smile and laugh at the ignorance of the people who make those comments. I know these people very well, and the vast majority of them are of meagre means.

They are also vulnerable because when they come to this country, even though they might be professionals in their country of origin, they do not have the knowledge of the law and their rights. That is why, by protecting the most vulnerable, it's important for us to do a number of things.

Let me tell you that this bill requires employees to apply for ministry approval for employees to work for more than 48 hours. It also requires that written agreement of employees be obtained in that regard. It requires that employees be provided with an information sheet produced by the Ministry of Labour before they sign any agreement. Finally, it requires that workers be provided with information on their rights and responsibilities under the Employment Standards Act in a number of languages besides English and French.

For these folks, language is very important. I can talk about what the York region department of health has done. They've translated various important pieces into six languages, in addition to English and French. They recognize that it's important for people to at least understand what their basic rights are and what health aspects have to be addressed before they can live happily and enjoy the quality of life we want them to enjoy.

I want to talk about these immigrants because I know; many of these are my long-time friends. I have attended to their needs and helped them in many ways. Even with all these requirements, I know that many of them will still not dare raise objections to additional hours beyond 48 in a week. That is why I hope this will only be the first step in protecting the rights of the most vulnerable, such as new immigrants. I hope the Minister of Labour, who is probably not listening, will take the second and third steps in protecting the rights of the most vulnerable.

1620

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton): It's an interesting debate, the changing of work hours and the effect it has on people in Ontario. It was interesting that last weekend was the standardbred races at Woodbine. I believe it was the Pepsi Challenge Cup. Traditionally, it's one of the major standardbred races in Ontario. Traditionally, it has been held on the same weekend as the Queen's Plate. However, this year, it has been separated by a week, much to the chagrin of the organizers and of the employees.

It was always a wonderful weekend for the employees to work, in both the Pepsi Challenge and the Queen's Plate, as it was a big tipper's weekend. The people who worked on that weekend did well. However, this year, because of this legislation and because of the length, the period of time between the shift changes, they could no longer hold it on the same weekend. Their staffing requirements were such that they had to change weekends for it.

This is a situation where new government regulations are getting in the middle of how business is conducted in Ontario. I think it creates a problem when legislation does that. The same thing can be said of a driver who goes from Toronto or some other city in Ontario, and drives for perhaps six, seven hours to his destination, unloads his load and gets back home on that same day. Now, because of this legislation, he won't be able to drive, particularly if he has a problem with weather, or he has to go slower than normal or there are traffic hold-ups.

That's another indication of where the legislation this government is introducing is going to get in the way of someone's personal business. I think that's a problem.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I'll speak at length later, but this is a totally inadequate bill for what it says it's going to accomplish. I listened to the Liberal members who spoke to it. I imagine they were given notes. I take them at their word that they believe everything they say about the adequacy of this bill, but if you have any background in this area and you talk to leaders in the labour movement, they will tell you this bill is totally inadequate.

It doesn't fulfill most of the promises that have been made by the labour minister and the government. When it comes to this bill, what they said they were going to do under the Employment Standards Amendment Act, which deals with hours of work and all these other things, and with things the Conservatives did before that our

party didn't agree with, we applauded the Liberals when they said they were going to fix it, but they haven't really. It fails to take a comprehensive approach to responsibly addressing hours of work, overtime and enforcement. Bill 63 actually keeps much of the Tory government's erosion of Ontario's hours-of-work rules.

Let me give you an example. It fails to revoke an employer's ability to establish regular minimum workdays of up to 13 hours a day. When I speak a little later, I'm going to give you more examples of the problems with this.

Ontario needs a 40-hour workweek now. Ontario remains out of step with many other jurisdictions across the country. We should be leaders, not so out of step. The workweek is 40 hours in British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Quebec, Newfoundland, Nunavut, Yukon, Northwest Territories, and under federal jurisdiction. I'll tell you more of what's wrong with this bill later.

Mr Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): I look forward to the comments from the member for Toronto-Danforth, which is very close to my riding.

I commend the Minister of Labour for bringing forward this legislation.

Ms Churley: Of course you do.

Mr Berardinetti: Of course I do. We, here on this side of the House, are in unanimity on this.

A few minutes ago the member from Erie-Lincoln made a comment to the effect that the government didn't think this was important enough and asked for a quorum call. I can explain to him that there is a meeting of the estimates committee going on, and many of us are working with members from the other parties to try to settle things before Thursday.

I want to stick to the issue here. Last Tuesday, Mr Murdoch made a few remarks regarding the member from Erie-Lincoln and called him, and I'm quoting from Hansard, an "incapable, incompetent minister handling" his portfolio. That's in the Hansard here. So let him who has not sinned cast the first stone.

We are attempting our best to bring forward the best possible legislation in the toughest conditions. I'm no expert; I'm new here. The Minister of Labour is trying his best. We think this is the best bill. We are united, unlike the opposition, where different members are making different comments toward each other.

Mr Murdoch goes on to say that the member from Erie-Lincoln "had his own agenda. He didn't want to do what the House wanted to do. This was passed in the House by all three parties, and he wouldn't do the job that he had to do as minister. He had a year to do it and he didn't do it."

Interjection.

Mr Berardinetti: It is related to the debate, because we are committed to working hard, unlike the previous government.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore has two minutes to reply.

Ms Broten: I want to direct my comments particularly to the member for Halton and the member for Toronto-Danforth.

First, to the member for Halton for saying that this is an example of a new government regulation that will get in the way of how business operates: As someone who has come from the business world to the Legislature and has spent a lot of time working with the business community, I have to question that statement. In my own community I've met with the South Etobicoke Industrial Employers Association, and I think that the member's statement is very, some might say, ridiculous. It's not a great imposition to ask an employer to fax in a form to ask for employees to be able to work beyond 48 hours. It's not a great imposition to ask an employer to obtain Ministry of Labour approval to average an employee's work hours, to distribute some forms in their place of employment so that the most vulnerable people, the people in our community who don't understand the language, who are of meagre means, who can't afford to lose their job, can enforce their rights. That is not a lot to ask an employer to do to ensure that our places of employment are fair and equitable across this province.

Second, I want to respond to the member for Toronto-Danforth. She talked about the imposition of a 40-hour workweek. I can tell the member for Toronto-Danforth that we have a different view on this side of the House. Our view is one of choice. If an employee chooses to work those extra hours, we are not going to impose it upon them. We are restoring the legislation back to the very form it was while the NDP government was in power, before it was taken away in 2001.

She also commented that we should have consulted more widely. The Ministry of Labour staff did consult. They met with 30 key labour industry and employee advocacy groups about how best to bring forward this legislation, and this is the very legislation that has come out of those consultations.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Hudak: I'm pleased to rise in response on this particular bill. I look forward to the comments from my colleague Ms Churley as well, who gave us an exciting preview in her first two minutes of NDP critique.

Ms Churley: Ours will be a little bit different.

Mr Hudak: It will be a bit different in theme, but we both will say that this bill does absolutely nothing to end the so-called 60-hour workweek. In fact, Ms Churley and I may agree, and other members may agree, that they should rename this bill the "emperor has no clothes" bill.

Ms Churley: That's good.

Mr Hudak: My colleague agrees. See, we're off to a good start in our critique of this bill from the opposition parties—pleased to see now an official opposition party. Congratulations are due to the new member for Hamilton East as well, on the opposition side as part of the NDP, in a resounding vote reflecting, I think, the voters' disgruntlement with the broken promises to date of the Dalton McGuinty government, of which this is yet another.

1630

We are debating the “emperor has no clothes” bill today. I say that because, despite proclamations on this side of the House when in opposition and despite proclamations on the campaign trail—Dalton McGuinty said he would get rid of the so-called 60-hour workweek—he brings this bill forward. No such thing exists in these pages. I challenge the member across the floor to point out the actual clause where the so-called 60-hour workweek is eliminated, because no such thing transpires in this very bill.

I don't know if I will have a chance to formally move that, Mr Speaker. You could help me with the rules to change the title of the act to the “emperor has no clothes” bill. Alternatively—

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): No.

Mr Hudak: I don't know if that's a single no or not.

I'm trying to be helpful to give a title to the bill which actually reflects the quality of the contents of this particular piece of legislation. If not “the emperor has no clothes act,” I say to my friend and colleague the Minister for Public Infrastructure Renewal, how about the “rubber stamp act”? I will call it the “rubber stamp act” as an alternative, because all it is really requiring is for more civil servants at the Ministry of Labour to get out the old rubber stamp and to stamp this document faxed in from workplaces across the province.

I would say, and I think my colleague Ms Churley would agree, that there's not going to be the enforcement provisions promised in this legislation. All you're going to have is some poor sap, who's going to have a very strong right arm, stamping piece of paper after piece of paper and filing them in some giant cabinet. We could call it filling the giant cabinet, the Ministry of Labour legislation, but it's not nearly as clever as the “emperor has no clothes act” or the “rubber stamp act.”

Hon David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): It's clever.

Mr Hudak: It's more interesting than the current name of the bill. Maybe we'll get into a debate about whether the name should change, but in terms of the content—not much in here.

Hon Mr Caplan: Outstanding.

Mr Hudak: I don't think I'd agree. There's not much in here, because all that is happening now is if an employee were to work more than 48 hours in a given week, they would need to agree to it in writing, and this document would be faxed to the Ministry of Labour. Remember that fellow I was talking about with the strong right arm and the big stamp? He goes to work, stamps it and puts it in the filing cabinet.

If the suggestion here is that employers, whether a significant number or a few bad apples, are abusing their relationship with the employees in the workplace and therefore are intimidating them to work more than 48 hours in a given week, the government would argue there is a case for intervention under those circumstances. I think members would agree, in a case of abuse like that,

to some way of making sure the employees are treated fairly. But I don't see why a signature by the employee is going to relieve that concern of abuse.

The previous legislation allowed for verbal commitments. This simply says, “We're going to get a piece of paper that will be rubber-stamped and put in the filing cabinet somewhere.” If you think a particular employee in the case in point is being abused or intimidated, why then would he or she not be abused and intimidated simply in signing this document or this form, which is then faxed on?

Granted, there is one small nod in here to the information age. Section 17.1 provides a mechanism for the employer to “apply to the director for an approval allowing some or all of its employees to work” a 60-hour workweek. It can be made by electronic means. Maybe that's what my colleague suggests is progress. Do you know what? Maybe I misdescribed it. The fellow with the giant stamp just needs a giant mouse to send out that electronic stamp back to the workplace. It's easier to do the electronic stamp than the rubber stamp. Maybe they won't have to hire as many civil servants in the stamp section of the Ministry of Labour, but nonetheless a redundancy in the workplace, and I don't think we'll get at what they had promised they would get at, which is relieving that intimidation that may occur, and unfortunately does occur from time to time, in the workplace.

Whether it's an electronic stamp or the old-fashioned rubber stamp, it's not going to make a whit of difference to address the issues that the government says they are concerned about. I know my colleague from Toronto-Danforth would agree with that point as well. It's not going to make a whit of difference in terms of relieving any intimidation in the workplace simply because there's an electronic or a rubber stamp.

Not to take any words out of my colleague's mouth, but let me give some quotes. In the Toronto Star of April 27, just after this bill was introduced for first reading, Wayne Samuelson said, “First of all, I'm disappointed.” Clearly, he thought there would be some real change.

Interjection.

Mr Hudak: Maybe there is some irony that I'm quoting somebody who probably doesn't usually agree with the Conservative Party, but clearly Mr Samuelson is saying, “Yes, yet another broken promise by the Premier who has gained fame in synonymity.” Synonymousness is a synonym with broken promises.

Interjection.

Mr Hudak: Cinnamon? Let me be clear for Hansard: Premier McGuinty is synonymous with broken promises. You know this. I said to my colleague from Ancaster-Flamborough and like area, “You hear that when you're back home. I know you work hard in your constituency. You're a former municipal politician. You hear the exact same thing I'm hearing.” They don't believe a word the guy says, including this bill, “the emperor has no clothes act.”

Hon Mr Caplan: That's not what I'm hearing.

Mr Hudak: My friend the public infrastructure and renewal minister says that it's not what he is hearing.

There was a recent survey that showed 9% of the Ontario population thought Dalton McGuinty was doing a good job. I say to our visitors in the gallery, there are more people who believe in the Loch Ness monster than believe Dalton McGuinty's doing a good job. I'm serious. More people believe in the Loch Ness monster than think Dalton McGuinty is doing a good job. He is right up there with those who think Elvis Presley is still alive.

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): He is.

Mr Hudak: He says, "He is." That's why you're on that side of the House with Dalton McGuinty, because you think he is doing a good job and you think Elvis Presley is alive. This is the synonymous part I was talking about. You know what? I'm a fan of Elvis, and if the man were still alive, I would love to go and see him perform. I don't think he's still alive and I don't think Dalton McGuinty is doing a good job. I don't think Dalton McGuinty keeps his promises or even cares about keeping his promises. If he did, we wouldn't have this bill before us; we would have a stronger bill in the realm of what the NDP would bring forward to keep that commitment.

Our feeling on this side, why we changed the labour laws: As my colleague who was speaking a bit earlier from the Markham area said—I thought the member from Markham was actually arguing against this bill initially because he talked about the need for flexibility in the workplace, for building that employer-employee trust relationship, allowing them to design the workplace so they can compete on an international stage. I thought that's what Markham was talking about, and that he was going to say, "Therefore, I voted against this bill." That was not his conclusion. I got my hopes up a little too high.

Our belief is that we need to develop that fundamental trust in the workplace, to offer that flexibility so our firms can compete in a different age. Toyota, by way of example, has a flexible labour agreement with their employees and is one of the leading auto plants not only in Ontario, not only in Canada, but internationally. One of the leading auto plants, Toyota, wants that kind of flexibility in their workplace agreements.

Nor do we see any reason to keep hiring civil servants with a rubber stamp, electronic stamp, what have you, simply processing pieces of paper so you can make a nod and pretend that you're keeping a campaign commitment when in reality you are not, when in reality you're breaking yet another promise from Dalton McGuinty. We thought that would not be the best place for labour resources to be employed—simply rubber-stamping—but rather on the enforcement side and developing competitive workplaces.

As I said, this bill actually does very little, if anything, to change that relationship, simply requiring a rubber stamp to take place. Maybe when they say the good things about this bill, they talk about section 1, which amends section 2 of the Employment Standards Act and requires a poster containing information about this bill to be placed in a prominent place in the workplace. Maybe

this is what the McGuinty government means by tougher enforcement in the workplace: a poster.

I don't know what this poster is going to say. The poster may say that if you were intimidated before into working more than 48 hours, you will be intimidated in a different manner by being forced to sign this document. Maybe will you find some solace in the fact that there's a bureaucrat somewhere who will stamp this document. I'm not sure exactly what that poster is going to say. Maybe it will have, like other posters I've seen, like the one in my office from the Toronto Sun, the Premier with a very long nose. Maybe that's what this poster should be in the workplace, representing, of course, another broken promise. And maybe Halton remembers, but I'm not sure how many broken promises there have been to date. In some sense it's countless; it's hard to keep track.

1640

Mr Chudleigh: Thirty-four.

Mr Hudak: The member suggests at least 34 major broken promises already.

Another part of the act that is receiving significant criticism is subsection 4(4), which amends section 17 of the act, and it provides for a situation where approval to go beyond 48 hours has been sought and not received, workers are allowed to work the increased hours for up to 30 days. So much for the effectiveness of the rubber stamp guy. I guess there's a 30-day delay by the time they go through the files and try to figure out if they should intervene in a particular situation.

If there was a particular abrogation of the act, if there was a particular breaking of the rules in the Employment Standards Act, it could continue for up to 30 days, so you wonder what the purpose of the rubber stamp, or the electronic stamp, is from the beginning if it continues. I suggest it's just a piece of paper to try to fool people into believing that a promise has been kept when, in fact, the opposite is really occurring.

Subsections 17.1(19) and (20): An application may be refused with no need to provide reason. I heard a significantly counter-intuitive argument from across the floor a few minutes ago where they suggested that business is going to like this act. I don't know of anybody actually, any major group that—maybe I'll hear this—my recollection is there's not a major group that has said this is the right way to do things, aside from the Liberal Party of Ontario. You have labour leaders—Mr Samuelson I quoted a few minutes ago—who have been tearing this legislation apart, who are very, very critical about it. The business community, as well, suggests this legislation is not going to do anything, and in fact is going to be cumbersome. It's going to encumber them because it is cumbersome in terms of filing this paperwork, which is not going to actually do anything. So to argue that this is going to help business, that business is in favour, and make it a more positive business environment for competing, it's a fallacy. It's false, and it makes no sense.

You would compel businesses potentially to hire somebody simply to shuffle pieces of paper around, which does not add to productivity. And even if you bought that argument, the notion that the Ministry of

Labour can refuse to grant an employee the right to work more than 48 hours, if they can refuse this request and not give a reason whatsoever, what kind of signal is that to businesses if this request to work overtime to get product to market—in the rush for the Christmas season, by way of example—is refused without any explanation from the Ministry of Labour? It makes one question if this government even cares about the business side of this equation.

Obviously they don't care about the employee side; otherwise, they would have actually done something as opposed to this rubber stamp approach. And by denying a business permission for the overtime without bothering to offer an explanation of that decision befuddles me. I can't understand it. Maybe from across the floor, when they do have quorum in the House, they'll have a member who will explain it back to me. But at this point in time, I cannot understand why the Ministry of Labour, in refusing this, and hence refusing product to get to market, would offer no explanation whatsoever for denying that application.

Another area that is significantly criticized: sections 6 and 7. They amend section 22 of the act to allow "employers and employees" to "continue to make written agreements to average hours of work for overtime pay purposes...."

How is that criticized? Let's be clear. It's criticized by the labour leaders who had thought, who had fair expectation initially, that some of their suggestions would be put forward in the legislation. Truth be told, they were not happy with our labour reforms. They had been promised by Premier McGuinty, on a wink and a nod, changes based on their recommendations and now they have seen that the emperor has no clothes. So they are critical, not only of the aspects about the paper exchange that will not protect workers in a vulnerable situation, but they are also very disappointed in the averaging of hours.

Let's be clear. The Hamilton Spectator, Gillian Livingston's article through Canadian Press: As the legislation was introduced by the minister, "Wayne Samuelson of the Ontario Federation of Labour said that doesn't mean the 60-hour workweek is dead, or workers won't be coerced into working longer hours." He was very clear. He says this bill does not achieve that.

If I have to choose between what Wayne Samuelson is saying and what Dalton McGuinty says—hands down. It's hard to trust a word the Premier says when he's broken his word so many times. There's that old expression: "Fool me once, shame on me. Fool me twice, shame on you." You fooled 36 or 37 times with all the broken promises. It's clearly shameful. So Samuelson is obviously very upset that promises made to him and his members have been broken.

Howard Hampton says that "the legislation doesn't protect workers at all." If I had to choose between what Howard Hampton says and what Dalton McGuinty says, hands down, I would choose Hampton. I don't believe a word he says any more.

Len Crispino, the president and CEO of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, says that while "there might be a

few bad apples out there that, of course, the minister should go after ... we just don't believe from the data that we've got that the issue is as widespread perhaps as the minister might imply." I'm not sure if those data have come forward to justify these changes, but nonetheless the Chamber of Commerce is critical of the legislation.

A further story, in the Toronto Sun, by Alan Findlay: A machinist, who wanted improvements in the law because he says he is owed funds by his former employer, seemed to have some expectation that this law would help him out. It does not; another disappointed taxpayer out there, based on broken promises. The Findlay article says, "Labour activists and critics said the new legislation will leave unpaid workers such as" this gentleman "with empty pockets." That's true.

To summarize, the bill is adding a paper burden to employers without actually doing anything to help employees. It does not affect the workweek and it militates against flexibility in the industry. It's not good for small business. It's not good for employees. It's not good for this government's reputation for breaking promises.

I hope I get more support to change the name of this legislation to the "emperor has no clothes act."

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Ms Churley: Thank you, Mr Speaker, I think you found that funny. I would move unanimous consent that we change the name of this bill to the "emperor has no clothes act." Is that agreed?

The Acting Speaker: No; first you need unanimous consent to move a motion.

Ms Churley: I'll just move right along here, then. We can do that at a later date. I will be speaking in a few moments anyway, but it's a perfect name for this bill, even though, God knows, the Conservatives and the NDP have a totally different point of view on this. One of the speakers over there earlier said that they like their 60-hour workweek, and we shouldn't bring in regulations to restrict employers and all of these kinds of things.

1650

We take the position—and this is why I'm agreeing with my colleague from Erie-Lincoln—that this is a major broken promise. That's what we're talking about here. I am serious: Do you guys know what you're doing over there? You've actually taken the Conservative bill and made it worse. You actually have made the bill worse. Talk about a broken promise. It's got a great name, the minister puts out a great press release to fool people into thinking they are actually improving the Conservative 60-hour-week legislation, and they're making it worse. That is shameful.

Let me tell you—and I agree with the previous speaker—the Liberals get up and say, "This is about choice." Non-unionized workers often don't have choice. A boss can go to them, vulnerable workers in particular, and say, "Hey, can you work those extra days? We're going to 13-hour days now as well. Can you work those few extra hours?" If the employee says no, they may be out of a job.

I'll talk a little bit more about this later.

Mr Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): I'm delighted to join in this debate on the 60-hour workweek. Frankly, I think it is a very reasonable approach that the minister and this government have taken. It combines enforcement and awareness initiatives, which are extremely important to ensure that the measures we're taking today can be reasonably enforced. At the same time, it is responsible in terms of the way it treats businesses, and that's important as well. I think it's very typical of the balanced approach this government takes to many of the issues that come before us.

Unlike the other side, the other parties, where quite often you've got an extreme approach on the right and an extreme approach on the left, we try to find a balanced approach that brings people together, that brings parties together, in the best interest and in the public interest.

I look at things like landlord and tenant issues. That's our approach there as well. We recognize the need to provide greater protection for tenants, and we're going to provide those protections. At the same time, we also recognize that we need to ensure we have a healthy rental market. So we're going to ensure that as we bring those protections forward, they don't harm the rental market.

The same thing can be said about relations between our unions and employees. We can't take extreme positions in terms of labour relations. We've got to take a balanced approach, because I think balance in governance is really what the public wants to see.

Frankly, the same thing comes with decisions on balancing budgets versus improving public services. Sometimes you can't do it all for everybody. You want to take a balanced approach to ensure you can balance the budget over time, which our upcoming budget is going to do, and at the same time improve the key public services the people of this province want to see.

This bill is very much in keeping with the approach this government is taking right across the board. It's in the public interest, and I'm proud to be able to get up and speak on it.

Mr Chudleigh: I'd like to ask if there is agreement on changing the name of this bill. Is there unanimous consent? That's what I'm looking for.

The Acting Speaker: You would have to seek unanimous consent of the House to move a motion.

Mr Chudleigh: Speaker, I ask for consent of the House.

The Acting Speaker: Is there unanimous consent of the House to move such a motion?

Mr Chudleigh: There is on this side.

The Acting Speaker: There is not.

Mr Chudleigh: It's too bad. It would be a democratization of the House.

This is an interesting debate, because it speaks to the Liberal philosophy, the Conservative philosophy and the NDP philosophy when dealing with labour regulations. My concern about this piece of legislation, as I mentioned earlier, is that these regulations get in the way of people's lives and of business lives.

As I mentioned earlier, the truck driver who is on a six-hour run gets held up and is an hour away from home. He's been to Sault Ste Marie or Sudbury, and he's on his way back to Toronto. He has reached the end of his shift hours; therefore he stops in Barrie and cannot restart his rig. He cannot continue his journey for 11 hours, because he needs 11 hours between shifts. This puts him in an untenable position, where he has to sit by the side of the road, he sleeps for six to seven hours, and then he has another five to six hours to kill until he can again get back in his rig and drive home. And all that time he's been away from his family.

So this is a regulation that has got into the middle of the way that business is done in Ontario. I think that's too bad. A government shouldn't put itself in a position to do those kinds of things.

Mr Jim Brownell (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): I'm indeed pleased to stand in support of Bill 63, and to speak for this legislation. It was interesting to hear my colleague across the aisle here, the member from Etobicoke-Lakeshore, speak about happy, safe and comfortable workers, and striking balances. This is what this legislation will do. It will strike a balance. It will strike a balance for the rights of the employer and the employees. It will look out for and protect workers, so that the 60 hours will not be imposed, that they will have that right to say no.

This government made a commitment to end the 60-hour workweek introduced by the previous government for that reason. We believed in what the people of this province needed. That was a workweek that was in keeping with what they try to balance in life; that is, a home life, their well-being at home and their well-being at work.

I believe this is the kind of legislation that will do that. We want to see our hard-working employees getting that balance of a rewarding work life, along with a meaningful and healthy personal life out in the world. I believe it's the right thing that we will have legislation where the employee can say no to an employer who requests that they work up to 60 hours a week.

That's important. The history of this province has shown that for a long period of time there has been a long struggle for the rights of workers, under-aged workers, unsafe working conditions. They battled and battled. This is one more aid to those people who battle. It's the aid that our government is providing to them, and I support it.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Erie-Lincoln has two minutes to reply.

Mr Hudak: I thank my colleagues for the comments on my remarks. I agreed with two of them; with two I did not.

The member for Scarborough Centre talks about the extreme approach of the Conservatives and the NDP. There's nothing extreme in demanding that a government keeps its promises. Perfectly reasonable. We expect the government to tell the truth. We expect the Premier to tell the truth. Ain't nothing extreme about that. Very standard.

He talked about bringing the parties together. Well, he certainly has brought people together, universally, to criticize this bill. The only people who seem to like it are the 70 members, or whatever it is, of the Liberal caucus. Everybody else, whether it's labour or business, is critical. So maybe it brought parties together against it.

And nobody has brought parties together against him like Premier Dalton McGuinty. Whether they're Conservatives, socialists, taxpayer groups, seniors, unions, food banks, fast food restaurants, the whole lot and kit and caboodle were unified against him on his ill-conceived Dalton McGuinty soup and salad tax, which he had to back down from. There's nothing like Dalton McGuinty to unify parties against his leadership.

Not purely, but 81% of the people in the province of Ontario don't think he's doing a good job. Nine per cent thought he was doing a good job in this survey. That's about the level who say they saw a werewolf skipping through their backyard and it wasn't Halloween. It's at the fantasy level, at about the Loch Ness monster's level of support.

To the member for Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh, the notion that this ends any so-called 60-hour workweek is a fallacy, a fake, phoney, flim-flam, false. It ain't doing no such thing. I've heard nobody who says it does, aside from members of the Liberal caucus.

Mr Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to rename this bill the "ain't nothing but a rubber stamp" act.

1700

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Ms Churley: Sometimes when I get up to speak about broken Liberal promises, I'm not really angry and I'm not really incensed. I just try to point out that the promises were made and they were broken, and the implications of that. But this broken promise actually makes me really angry.

There are some new members here in the Liberal caucus who weren't here, sitting over there in the official opposition, when the Conservatives brought in—I don't call them Progressive Conservatives. The new federal party took "Progressive" right out of Conservatives, and these guys should too. I didn't agree with their position on the 60-hour workweek, but neither did the Liberals, who were outraged. I remember they were as outraged as New Democrats. They were going to get up—they were out trolling for votes with the labour movement—and they were going to change all this and fix it. Everybody believed them, I guess. Then you hear a Liberal stand up and say, "We consulted. We consulted with the labour movement."

Let me say this, because it's a parliamentary way to say it: They are being disingenuous at best in terms of saying, "We consulted." What they leave out is that after consulting they didn't listen to what the labour movement and others had to say. They came out with a bill. They call it a balanced bill. If you read this bill, do you know what it means, Speaker? You'll be happy to hear this, because when you're not in the chair, you're a member of the former government. It's worse than your

bill when it comes to protecting workers' rights. It actually makes it worse, and that's what's so appalling about this.

Should the members of the Liberal government take a really close look at what this bill actually does, and listen to Wayne Samuelson and some of the others who are expressing real disappointment in this bill, then they might change their minds. Do you know what this makes me think of more and more?

Hon Mr Caplan: The social contract.

Ms Churley: I'm happy to talk about the social contract at any time, because we're talking here about workers' rights. Let me tell you something. When Liberals bring up the social contract—

Interjections.

Ms Churley: Rabble, rabble, rabble. Listen to them—blah, blah, blah. Do you know what it means? They're feeling pretty vulnerable when we get up here and tell them they've all actually not only broken a promise, another promise—how many has it been now?—but one they made such a racket about.

Interjections.

Ms Churley: Listen to them—blah, blah, blah, because I'm getting to them.

They brought in a law that's worse than yours, Mr Speaker, when you were in government.

Interjections.

Ms Churley: There they go again—blah, blah, blah. Listen to the Minister of the Environment. Calm down now and listen closely, because this bill is a bad bill.

Wayne Samuelson: "First of all, I'm disappointed. Clearly, we thought there was going to be some real change," Samuelson said, referring to the Liberal campaign promise to get rid of Tory changes to the Employment Standards Act that affect roughly 4.5 million non-unionized workers in Ontario."

He and many of the other labour leaders and ordinary workers who have actually seen the bill and heard what's in it have expressed the same concern and disappointment. There is no justification for it, absolutely none. When they were in opposition, they said they were going to fix it, and they've actually made it worse.

My leader and our critic and others in my caucus have pointed out some of the flaws in this bill and made some suggestions as to what can be done to fix it. First of all, we believe it's so badly flawed, in fact makes things worse for workers, that it should be withdrawn and fixed. Failing that, the minister keeps saying that to deal with some of the flaws and omissions in his bill, "Don't worry, we're going to have more proaction inspecting workplaces." But then what we did, and I know my leader did, was we took a look at that. The previous government did a lot of downsizing in that ministry, and the Liberals have not replaced any of those. There is a backlog of several thousand, and the minister knows that.

Interjection.

Ms Churley: I guess he's saying our research is wrong. I will compare my research to his research any day, because I stand up in this House, as do my leader

and others, with the budget in hand on a daily basis. That's why I say to the Premier or anybody, "Take the budget out and look at it," because they absolutely deny the budget in front of them, in front of my eyes; I'm reading from it. They stand up—reminds me of what the Tories used to do—and say, "No, you're wrong."

I asked the minister—well, I asked the Premier but he handed it on, I guess, to the energy minister—about a regulation change; a sneaky, behind-closed-doors, by stealth, change in regulation—another promise broken—around taking the politics out of setting hydro rates. They said they were going to change that so the Ontario Energy Board did it by next year; I believe it was April of next year. There was a bill brought forward. Then we found out that very recently they brought a new regulation that now lets the cabinet make those rate decisions after the next election. We all know what that means. We saw it again, speaking of the previous government: getting really concerned already about their next election, and knowing that their rates are going to skyrocket because of the privatization, and knowing the implications of an independent body making those decisions—that they're going to skyrocket and they're going to be held responsible. We told them that, but now secretly, quietly, another broken promise. They're politicizing it again.

I stood up today, just like now. I have the bill in front of me and I'm telling them what's in it. They say, "No, no, no; you're wrong." I read directly from the budget about cuts coming to the Ministry of the Environment. They say, "No, no, no; you're wrong." They're right in front of my eyes. I speak to the Minister of Energy and I have the new regulation in my hands. I'm reading from it, and he says, "No, no, no; you're wrong." This is ridiculous.

Hon Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment): You are.

Ms Churley: The Minister of the Environment is still yelling, "You are."

Hon Mrs Dombrowsky: You're wrong.

Ms Churley: I guess I can read and understand what I'm reading and she can't, because I've got the budget in front of me, I'm reading from the budget, and she's telling me I'm wrong. This is the kind of government and these are the kinds of ministers we now have in power who can't even read their own budgets and their own regulations, and they get up and say we're wrong.

I'm going to tell you again I am angry about this bill; I am very angry about this bill. This, I started to say earlier, is a good example of why we need to change the political system, why we need real democratic renewal, not just coming up with a fixed date for an election. We need to change the whole process so backbenchers in this place don't feel that they have to stand up and read the notes they're given to support something as unsupportable as this because they've been told to, because some of them, I guess, are still hoping to get in cabinet or whatever. Do they really know what's in this bill, this bill that they stand up and justify? I would think that some of the people over there are decent people and care about

workers. Therefore, I would think that they haven't really paid attention to what is in this bill, because they are breaking one of their fundamental promises, a promise that they went out and trolled for votes over the election, in the labour movement; remember? They're going to get rid of the 60-hour workweek. Well, now we have 13-hour days. We've got vulnerable employees.

I'm going to come back to this again. An earlier Liberal backbencher got up and read all the notes and said, "We consulted with labour"—didn't say that labour ended up not supporting the bill. I will add that again: Yes, they were consulted but they weren't listened to; typical of the previous government. We have the Liberal government doing the same thing.

Let me tell you about a few of the problems with this. You've heard them before. I know, because of the political system that we have, nobody is going to change. I'd love to see just one person in this caucus, just one, stand up and say that they see the flaws in this bill and they want it fixed, or at the very least they want an increase in the budget over at the Ministry of Labour so that these so-called promised inspections can happen.

Interjection.

Ms Churley: A lot more than you're talking about, Minister, believe me, given the backlogs that you have. What this bill actually does is make it worse than the Tories' 60-hour weeks. It's a fact. Did you think you were going to see that after the Liberals made such a fuss over your bill? I didn't think I was going to see that.

So what has happened here? You have vulnerable workers; they're not part of the union. They go to work. The employer says that somebody in a mine, or wherever they are, whatever their work situation is—I guess most workers in mines are unionized. They're in a work situation where they've already worked their eight-hour shift and the boss comes to them and says, "Your replacement hasn't come in yet. I need you to work for another few hours." If that worker says no, guess what could happen to that worker? They talk about choice over there. They want to give workers choice. I'll tell you about choice and dangerous work situations.

1710

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): They're given the door.

Ms Churley: Quite frequently, what they'll get is the door, as my colleague from Nickel Belt says, and we've seen it. We have seen it.

Interjection.

Ms Churley: How does that work? They're given the door. They're fired if they don't work those extra hours, even if they don't want to, even if they're tired, even if they think it's dangerous, even if they've got kids home alone because the babysitter has to go. All of those are the kinds of things they have to weigh.

The single mom in the workplace: "Well, the babysitter's going to go now. I know that babysitter can't stay any longer. My kids are going to be home alone. On the other hand, I'm barely getting by on my wages here to feed my kids. I've got to make a choice here, and the

choice is going to be that I'm going to take a chance and leave these kids at home for those few extra hours I have to work."

The worker in a dangerous job is already tired and is asked to work several hours because the replacement hasn't come in, or whatever, and is afraid to say no and puts himself in a very dangerous situation where he's tired and can hardly stay awake, or whatever, and is stuck working those extra hours because he has no choice.

Hon Christopher Bentley (Minister of Labour): That's why we're doing what we're doing.

Ms Churley: The labour minister still doesn't get it. Read the bill, Minister. Listen to the labour lawyers and leaders who have read your bill and who care about workers.

Interjections.

Ms Churley: They're laughing at that. They went out and trolled for votes in the labour movement and from workers in the election. Are they listening to those labour leaders now, the ones who have been fighting for the rights of workers all these years? Without them we wouldn't have the kind of advancements we have for workers today. They gave their advice to the government, and they didn't listen.

Interjection.

Ms Churley: We certainly didn't bring in 60-hour workweeks and 13-hour days.

Ms Martel: Legislation worse than the Tories'.

Ms Churley: Yes, I've pointed that out several times.

What they're doing is going to the lowest common denominator. I'm trying to find in my notes how many provinces have 40-hour workweeks. Ontario should be a leader. It used to be a leader, and we're falling far behind. British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Quebec, Newfoundland, Nunavut, Yukon and the Northwest Territories have 40-hour workweeks. They seem to survive with 40-hour workweeks, don't they?

A province that I notice is missing from this 40-hour workweek is Alberta—Ralph Klein. Is Ralph Klein in Alberta the new standard for the Liberal government when it comes to protecting workers in this province? The lowest common denominator—let's have the 60-hour workweek; let's make it worse than the Tories in terms of worker protection.

Did the minister take the time to look at the legislation in all those other province where they're getting by very nicely with 40-hour workweeks? Buildings are still being built, people are still going to work and coming home, things are accomplished. The economy is humming in most of those provinces.

This bill is not balanced, and the Liberals have to understand that.

I know how this place works. I've been around for a long time, and I would say this of all the parties, and it really does go a long way to saying that we have to change the system. We know this government is going to pass this bill, and we know that most of the members in the caucus aren't even going to read this bill, because they're busy. They've got their own portfolios. They

don't know a lot about this issue. They're given the notes, and the minister has justifications for all these things. They listen to that and, believe it or not, read the notes and say, "We think it's good legislation. It's a fair balance, and we're going to support it and pass it." So it's going to happen, and it's wrong. What is happening here is fundamentally wrong: Another really big promise has been broken.

Here's the government that's now making announcement after announcement, day after day, trying to divert people away from the broken promise on the new health tax for moderate- and modest-income people. The richer you are, the bigger the corporation, the less you pay proportionately. It sounds like Tories to me: "No deficit." They said, "We're not going to raise taxes." "We'll get rid of the deficit," and they knew there was going to be a deficit too. Believe me, they knew. They went out and made all these promises.

This was a promise I thought the Liberals were going to keep. I actually believed their commitment to this. If you go back and read the comments that some of the Liberals made in opposition here, it would occur to you that they would be bringing in tough legislation to change this bill so that it really was a 40-hour workweek. It continues and makes worse the previous government's 60-hour workweek bill.

Hon Mr Caplan: We don't believe it.

Ms Churley: I know they don't believe it over there, and that's a problem.

Ms Martel: Read the bill.

Ms Churley: Read the bill. I just pointed out before you got here that we stand up here and we have documents in front of us, like the budget today, yesterday and the day before, today a regulation, a new one I was reading to the Minister of Energy, and one to the Minister of the Environment on the budget and the budget cuts—I'm standing here with it in front of my eyes and I'm reading from it. They stand up and say, "You're wrong." I'm reading their own documents. This is really scary.

This reminds me of what Tories used to do. They're the same tactics to get away with the broken promises, and their phony press releases that go out with all the right words in them, that give the impression they're doing one thing when they're doing something else.

Yes, I'm angry about this bill. This bill is going to hurt workers across this province, especially vulnerable workers, workers who are not unionized. They are going to be worse off—worse off—than they were under the Tories.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Thirteen-hour workdays.

Ms Churley: Thirteen-hour workdays.

Mr Kormos: And 60—

Ms Churley: I've said this; it's okay.

Mr Kormos: Sixty-hour-plus.

Ms Churley: Over 60 hours a week. They haven't put enough resources into the ministry to hire more inspectors, do all that kind of work. There was no attempt to eliminate overtime averaging in the bill.

The overtime averaging, let me tell you, is a big gift to employers. How many of you over there actually even know what that means? How many know what this actually means? It is a huge gift to the employers. Averaging, in case you don't know, was brought in by the Tories under the ESA 2000 and allows overtime to be averaged over up to four weeks. I'm not going to go into the details of that because I see that my time is running out here. But you have been told by my leader, Howard Hampton, and by our labour critic who is here now, Peter Kormos, what that means and the implications of that.

The biggest thing for me, and I keep coming back to it, is that non-unionized workers are vulnerable in the workplace without adequate enforcement, and we don't have it. The employer has the power to deprive employees of their livelihood. It happens out there all the time. This bill is actually going to make that worse.

The Minister of Labour said that he would dedicate resources to investigate alleged violations and prosecute employers. He promised to conduct 2,000 proactive inspections of workplaces, focusing on high-risk employees, yet there's no new money for the ministry investigations. That puts into question the whole McGuinty commitment to this initiative.

That's on top of the broken promise around fixing—repairing—the previous government's—the Conservatives'—60-hour workweek, which they were so appalled about when they were over there in opposition. They said they were going to fix it and they didn't; they made it worse. Some workers are going to suffer as a result. That is why I am so angry about this. They should withdraw it, keep their promise and fix the bill.

1720

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Hon Mrs Dombrowsky: I just want to say that I get angry when the budget of the Ministry of the Environment is misrepresented, when it is suggested in this Legislature that there has been a decrease in the expenditure at the Ministry of the Environment. This government has increased the budget at the ministry by 11.2%. The budget has increased from \$285 million to \$317.4 million.

I do, though, have information that when the NDP were in government, the Ministry of the Environment, during the entire term of the NDP government, was cut by almost half a billion dollars—almost \$500 million. I'm just very surprised that when this government has taken the action and made the investments in protecting water, in protecting our air, in showing leadership on diversion, someone would have the nerve to stand in the House and suggest that this government has reduced our commitment to the Ministry of the Environment. Quite the opposite is true.

With regard to Bill 63, I want to compliment the Minister of Labour. I believe that he is moving forward in this area in a very responsible way. Again, I want to comment. The member for Toronto-Danforth proceeded to give us a lecture on not consulting with the labour movement or other stakeholders in the province. I just

want to remind the member for Toronto-Danforth: How much consultation did the NDP do when they brought in the social contract? I know you don't like to hear that, but for my family, were was directly affected by the social contract, it tends to be something that you don't forget easily. So I commend the minister for the good work he has done in Bill 63.

Mr Hudak: There seems to be a bit of a disagreement between the Minister of the Environment and the member for Toronto-Danforth on the environment budget, and I will try to be the unbiased arbiter of this agreement. I'm not a member of that party nor a member of that party, but I've got to tell you, based on what I've seen in the last nine months here in the assembly, I side with Toronto-Danforth every single time. I don't believe a word Dalton McGuinty—or most of his cabinet ministers; not all—says any more. This whole budget flim-flam where he said that every penny for the health care premium was going to health care was not true. It's going into sewer production. It's probably going into the Minister of the Environment's budget. I don't believe a word that you guys say. So as the unbiased arbiter of this debate about the Ministry of the Environment's budget, I'm picking Toronto-Danforth. I think she's the one telling the truth.

On Bill 63, sure, you might have consulted, you sent out a document to consult, but you didn't listen. Certainly when you see the quotes from labour leaders, they might have given their submissions but they didn't see their advice reflected in this legislation. So you wonder what the purpose of consulting is if you don't listen. Then to hark back to the social contract over a decade ago, a last refuge of a desperate government when their rebuttal in this legislation is to talk about the social contract—come on. Give me a break. What was that, 1994? 1993? A decade. That was so long ago that Jean Chrétien and Paul Martin were still friends. Let's get back to the debate.

Mr Kormos: Folks have to understand that hopefully before the afternoon is over, the member for Nickel Belt, Shelley Martel, is going to be speaking to this bill.

What the Liberals have done, you see, they've taken the Tories' 60-hour workweek and supersized it. That's what they have done. I find myself, for the rarest of times, in agreement with the Minister of the Environment, because I agree with her: This bill ranks with the social contract as one of the most deplorable things that has been done in this Legislature. So I agree entirely with the Minister of the Environment when she compares this bill to the social contract. I have no more regard for this bill and how it treats workers than did that social contract of, oh, decades-plus ago.

On Sunday I was down in Virgil, where the United Food and Commercial Workers were opening up one of their four migrant worker help centres here in the province: one down in Niagara, one out Simcoe-Delhi way, one out toward Leamington, where Mexican workers and Caribbean workers come to pick tomatoes or fruit in the case of Niagara, or tobacco, ginseng and peanuts in the case of the Simcoe-Delhi-Tillsonburg area.

If this government had any regard for labour at all; if it really had any regard for working women and men; if it had any regard for the people who toil hard, sometimes at great risk to themselves, putting food on our table and creating the wealth in this province—wealth that they, oh so rarely, ever have an opportunity to share; if this government had any regard for working women and men at all, it would permit those agricultural workers to organize themselves into trade unions so they could collectively bargain not just wages but, far more fundamentally, health and safety conditions in their workplaces. Agricultural workers work in some of the most dangerous workplaces in this province, in this country, across North America. The Liberals have scorned and spat on those hard-working women and men in our agricultural industry. Liberals could give a tinker's dam if more agricultural workers die or are maimed or are poisoned in those agricultural workplaces. They say, "Ah, be gone with you. Don't bother us. Liberals don't care about working women and men."

The Acting Speaker: The member for Toronto-Danforth has two minutes to reply.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Oh, I'm sorry; one more question and comment. I apologize.

Hon Mr Bentley: So much to say, but so little time. It's unfortunate that the member for Toronto-Danforth shed more heat than light on the debate, and it is unfortunate that the analysis of the legislation didn't reflect the Tory legislation and didn't reflect the historical protection that existed, yes, under the NDP years and under the Liberal years before, because what has existed in the province of Ontario for years—in fact, arguably, for decades—is the right, when a worker wishes to work more than 48 hours in a week, to choose, and, second, the ministerial oversight.

What the Tories eliminated in ESA 2000 was the ministerial oversight, which we have restored. The honourable member across says that is making it worse for workers—not clear how that could possibly be. In fact, by restoring ministerial oversight, you provide the platform for the appropriate inspection mechanism. That's number one.

Second, they keep referring to overtime averaging. In fact, what we did in this bill is return to the historical fact, which was, when you overtime-average you have to get permission from the ministry, which existed under the NDP and for some time before that. What the Tories had done in ESA 2000 was to say that you could wait for up to four weeks of overtime averaging before returning and asking the ministry for permission. We returned and said, essentially, that if you want to overtime-average anything—two weeks and more—you ask for permission.

Finally, enforcement: You fix the process which didn't work under the NDP, didn't work under the Tories and, frankly, really hasn't worked, and then you resource it. We're fixing it.

Just a few of the things I'd like to say.

The Acting Speaker: Now the member for Toronto-Danforth has two minutes.

Ms Churley: If the Minister of Labour wants to see heat, he has seen nothing yet to go forward with this bill. If you think, after trolling for votes before the last election, that you are going to be able to get away with it in the next election, you can forget it. This is a bad bill. The workers out there will tell—

Interjections.

Ms Churley: They continue to chuckle and laugh. I wonder if there is some way we can create some kind of mandatory course to teach ministers how to read their own bills, how to read their own budgets, how to read their own regulations and laws that they make around the cabinet table. I have it in front of me. They don't ever have them in front of them when they're standing up. When the Minister of the Environment stands up and says that, she doesn't know what she is talking about. Turn to page 12. I'm reading a line from their own budget. They stand up and say, "You're wrong," constantly. Somebody should teach these ministers how to read their own budgets.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): Summer school with Marilyn.

Ms Churley: I think summer school with Marilyn is a good idea. I can teach you how to read a budget, how to read your own bills. That's it. Come and I'll show you, and how to stand up and not be so, shall we say, disingenuous. I think that's acceptable, isn't it? We hear a lot of disingenuous piffle in this place. That's a very mild word, but I can get away with that.

Interjection.

Ms Churley: "Piffle," describing what is in this bill. This bill needs to be corrected. I'm going to tell you again that it's going to make things worse for workers in this province. You've put a minimum amount of money into enforcement. There are still thousands of backlogs. You're not going to do anything you're saying you're doing, Minister.

1730

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East): I'll be speaking on Bill 63 and be sharing my time with my esteemed colleague the member for London North Centre.

I'm really proud to be speaking about this bill. What this bill does is keep pace with what is happening in labour and in business. It strikes the balance we need. The minister went out and consulted with employees and employers to make sure he could strike that balance, a balance that wasn't there in the previous government, which only looked at the employers and did not look out for the needs of the employees. What the minister has done is that through this Bill 63 he has brought, the ministry will have oversight and inspection.

I come from a family of labourers. When we first came here to this great province of Ontario, to this great country of Canada, it was in the 1960s. In the 1960s, both my mother and father worked as labourers, as well as my uncle, my aunt and everybody else. I can tell you a story about my uncle. My uncle's a butcher. Back in the 1970s he was on the cutting edge of the meat industry.

Mr Leal: He helped to build Mississauga.

Mr Fonseca: That's right; he helped develop and build Mississauga.

My uncle would often work extraordinary hours because he was trying to put food on the table for three kids. I remember him coming home exhausted. The workplace was not what the workplace is today. There were many health and safety issues when it came to lighting, heating or workplace practices in the shop he worked in. But often, for fear of reprisal, my uncle would not complain at all, as others would never complain, about the conditions at work, not complain about being exhausted, and just continue to go in and put in his time.

Tragedy happened one day with my uncle. He went in exhausted, and sometimes when you are overly tired accidents happen that should not happen. My uncle lost two fingers. He lost two fingers on that day, and every time I think about him, I think about health and safety in the workplace and the amount of hours he had to work at times when he did not want to work those hours.

What this bill does is bring in measures to limit the amount of hours somebody would have to work if they feel they're overstressed, overworked, overtired or for other reasons. Many times there are workers who feel that for fear of reprisal they can't say no to their employer, that they don't want to come in. That could be to go see a soccer game, to make sure they're at their child's wedding, graduation, being with loved ones. All this makes a difference. For the employee and the employer, what this bill does is bring that balance so that they can make those important events and don't get hurt.

The member from Halton was talking about drivers and allowing drivers to drive all hours. My feeling is that we should not stress employees to a point, through sleep deprivation, that we cause accidents, not only to themselves but to others on the road. I don't want to be on a highway where a driver has been out for 15 or 20 hours and is going to harm others as well as himself or herself.

This government made a commitment to end the 60-hour workweek introduced by the previous government. This proposed legislation is aimed at that commitment, which we are holding to—another promise kept.

We want to restore a worker's right to choose whether to work more than 48 hours. We are not taking that choice away; we are giving them choice. If they don't want to do it, they don't have to. But if they do want to work those extra hours—listen, coming from business, I understand that the business climate has also changed. Many businesses today work on a just-in-time basis. There are times, depending on what sector they're in, when they have to ramp things up and have people in many more hours to make sure they get that production and get the stuff out. But there are times when business does slow down or is cyclical and they may not need as many hours. This bill allows for that balance, because we also understand that we want a thriving economy. We want to make sure the economy and the business sector are competitive with the rest of the world.

Ontario's hard-working employees deserve to be able to have this balance and have rewarding work lives with

meaningful, healthy personal lives. As a result of the previous government's legislation, some employees have been too tired with their jobs, as I've said, and have feared saying no to their employers who request that they work up to 60 hours in a week.

At present, there is no government oversight to support the employee's choice. The Minister of Labour's approval of hours of work over 48 in a week, a fundamental protection that had existed for decades, was removed without much regard to how the vulnerable would have their rights respected. That is being given back to employees.

This minister will make sure there is a good awareness campaign in many languages, because our province is so diverse and made up of so many different languages. Many times, as with my family, many of the second and third generation are now bilingual, but when they first arrived in this great province, they actually did not speak English very well. They just spoke their mother tongue, which was Portuguese.

To make sure those newcomers, who most of the time are the most vulnerable, these measures, the Employment Standards Act and parts of it—that awareness will be there in the workplace in different languages, so they are aware of their rights, because many of them are not aware of their rights today. We can and must fulfill the wish of all Ontarians that we have the safest and fairest workplaces in the world.

What is Bill 63? If passed, this bill would restore protection for vulnerable workers that existed for decades. It provides government oversight by the Ministry of Labour over employees who work more than 48 hours a week. We would protect the vulnerable and support the choice of all workers about whether to work excess hours.

The benefits to employees: This bill, if passed, would restore protection for workers that existed for decades, as I have said, but was removed in 2001 by the previous government.

Maybe the previous government was not aware of how hard many labourers—many other workers are out there putting in certain hours. I know they were paying many of their friends—I heard they paid over \$100,000 to one of their consultants for one e-mail. Well, if you could do that, if you were being paid over \$100,000, you wouldn't have to work those 40 or 50 or 60 hours a week. Those types of jobs don't exist for 99.9999% of Ontarians, and many of them have to work 50 and 60 hours a week to put bread on the table and be able to buy some of the essentials they need for their families.

1740

Workers, with this bill, would be able to freely choose to work excess hours because the government would provide oversight to their agreements. Workers would also be able to freely choose any overtime averaging because the government would provide oversight to their agreements.

There are benefits to the employers. Like we said, we want a thriving business climate. This proposed bill is part of a comprehensive strategy to bring about real

change in employment standards and practices in Ontario, change that will benefit the workplace parties.

The minister, I know, has really moved on labour issues when it comes to workplace health and safety, making sure people are in a safe environment. When it comes to working the extraordinary hours that many of us do in very stressful times, the minister is well aware of the pressures that are on the working family in Ontario on a daily basis. Those pressures come from within the workplace and outside the workplace. We have to be aware of those and make sure employees are aware of those, but there has to be a balance so that those jobs exist for all Ontarians and so we can continue to make this the best place to live in the world.

It's been my pleasure to speak on Bill 63. I'm now going to pass on this continued dialogue to my esteemed colleague the member for London North Centre.

Ms Deborah Matthews (London North Centre): It's a real honour for me to speak on this bill that was introduced by my colleague from London, the Minister of Labour. We share many things and I certainly am happy to support him in this most important piece of legislation.

I like to think that my grandfather is watching from above. I think he would be watching this with a big smile on his face, partly because he'd be astonished that his granddaughter was actually an MPP, but he would also be astonished to think that we are, in the year 2004, debating a bill to end the 60-hour workweek.

My grandfather's name was John Henry Matthews IV. He was an immigrant from the island of Guernsey in the Channel Islands. He arrived here and worked on a farm. He was a watchmaker in Guernsey, but when he came here, he got the only job he could, working on a farm outside Brantford. As time went on, he came to work at the Brantford Expositor. He worked there as a lithographer, I think, or a typesetter. There's some question in the family about what his actual job was, but what we all know for sure is that he was very active in organizing the union at the Brantford Expositor.

Mr Leal: He probably knew Bob Nixon's father, Harry.

Ms Matthews: He probably did know Harry Nixon, yes.

He was a tireless advocate for the working person. He was a CCF candidate, in fact, which is interesting. My family history is a bit unusual in that all parties seem to have been represented in my past. I think my inspiration comes more from John Henry Matthews IV than some others. However, my grandfather, as I said, would be quite taken aback to think that of all the progress that was being made in terms of workers' rights, here we would be in the year 2004 talking about the 60-hour workweek.

This bill is about allowing workers to decide without undue pressure, without coercion, how to manage the very difficult balance between work and the other demands we all have on our time. This bill will affect many people, but the people I want to talk about right now are parents. This bill is a very important piece of legislation that will allow parents to fulfill their respon-

sibility to earn money to support their children: to pay for food, to pay for clothing, to pay for shelter. But it will also allow them to be parents and do the other things that parents want to and must do with their children.

Think about 60 hours a week; think about what that means. Sixty hours is 10 hours a day. If you add commuting time to that, I think it's impossible to work 60 hours a week and be the kind of parent we all would like to be.

This bill, in my mind, is about allowing parents to spend time with their children without having to worry about losing their job. Of all the things a parent can give their child, there is nothing more important than their time. This bill is about allowing parents time to hang out in the kitchen, chatting about the day's events while they're preparing supper. This bill is about time to help kids with homework. It's about time to do chores together, time to read together. This bill is about time for parents to play with their kids: just have fun, throw a ball around, go for a bike ride. This bill will allow parents to tell stories about the past, to share the history of the family. It will allow parents the chance to dream about the future with their children.

This is a bill about time to share life's victories and life's disappointments. It's about heartthrobs and heartbreaks. It is said that no one has ever said on their deathbed that they wished they had spent more time at work. No one has ever said they wished they had spent more time at work.

I have three wonderful children. I am more proud of my children than I am of anything else. Sadly, for me, they are all now in their 20s and have moved on. I have one in Halifax, one in Alberta and one in Ottawa.

For most of their time growing up, I was a single mom. I was trying to balance their needs and my work needs. I have to say that it's an impossible balance. I'm speaking as someone who had far more supports than most single moms. Fortunately, their dad was very active in their lives, so he was a big part of their growing up as well. But I was a single mom. I guess I still am, if you can still be a single mom once the kids have gone—I don't know.

Nonetheless, I often had to decide whom I would let down. Would I let down my job, or would I let down my kids? It was always a tough choice. I can't imagine how tough it would be if I had to choose between losing my job or working 60 hours a week. This bill is about protecting the most vulnerable people from having to make that choice.

Currently, under Ontario legislation, there are moms out there who have to decide between losing their job or taking care of their kids. That is not the kind of Ontario I want to live in. It is not the kind of Ontario Liberals want to live in. This bill is not just about helping single moms spend more time with their kids, although I think that's what I will think most about it.

Mr McMeekin: That would be a good name for the bill. It beats his name, doesn't it?

Ms Matthews: Yes, it beats that name.

This is also about letting people care for their parents. It's about letting people volunteer. It's about letting people continue with their education, maybe just relaxing, going for walks, enjoying the great outdoors. There is more to life than work.

This legislation is also about addressing a power imbalance in the workplace. It's about limiting the coercive powers invoked by some employers. I want to stress that this is about some employers using that coercive power. The vast majority of employers in this province are responsible and are respectful of their employees, because in fact that is the best way to run a business. But it's about putting more control in the hands of the employees. This bill is also a good bill for employers because the legislation would in fact level the playing field because it wouldn't give coercive employers advantages over fair-minded employers.

In conclusion, I'm very happy to support this piece of legislation. I think it is about more time for the things that are truly valuable.

1750

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Baird: I listened with a great deal of interest to the speeches from the members for Mississauga East and London North Centre. You would listen to this speech and you would think that this is somehow a monumental piece of legislation, that the face of Ontario will be changed forever, that it's akin to tearing down the Berlin Wall within the working world. I ask the member for London North Centre, do any trade unions support this bill? How many?

Mr Hudak: None.

Mr Baird: "None," the member for Erie-Lincoln says. What is the section of the bill that you find objectionable? Subsection 17(3). They can just apply for the more than 60 hours, no problem. They've got this old desk over in the Ministry of Labour, down at 400 University Avenue. I worked there. They pull out the big stamp and hire someone, recall them from their layoff notice to sit there and just stamp it "Approved," "Approved," "Approved." These guys may even automate it—get 10, 20 or 50 people in there doing it—to read them first and then rubber-stamp them rather than just rubber-stamping them.

To read this piece of legislation, one would think it was something substantive. I'll tell you what would have been substantive: the legislation that the Harris government brought in to restore balance, equity and labour relations in Ontario. I'm of course talking about that great Bill 7. There was a real piece of legislation that restored a little balance in our labour law. That was a real piece of legislation. That's the type of legislation we want to see coming from this government, but I fear we will not get it. I fear that we will be left wanting from this Minister of Labour.

Mr Kormos: I want to acknowledge that the bill imposes one hard cap—it does—and that is that no worker can be called upon to work more than 13 hours a day. When you recognize that the bill supersedes the

Tories' 60-hour workweek, and you understand that the only hard limit is 13 hours a day, that means that this bill promotes 91-hour workweeks. Even the Tories didn't dare venture into 91-hour workweeks. This bill purports to remove the 60-hour workweek. I suppose in a perverse sense it does, because it creates a 60-hour-plus workweek where you don't even need a certificate; all you need is to have made the application. Of course, the Ministry of Labour being destaffed and underfunded as it is, no applications are going to be responded to because there's nobody there to sign the certificates. That's why the author of the bill had to deem permission to have been granted in the event that you don't get a response from the ministry after having made the application.

This is the most egregious anti-worker piece of legislation we've seen since the very early days of the Tory government, when they repealed the right of agricultural workers to organize, the fundamental charter right of agricultural workers to organize themselves into collective bargaining units, trade unions. So I say to this government that it has absolutely nothing. Its members should please read the legislation, and if push comes to shove, call up your local Steelworker or CAW, or OPSEU, or CUPE, or International Association of Machinists' rep—or call Sid Ryan, because after the 28th, Sid Ryan is going to be in Ottawa. So call Sid now, while he's still down in Oshawa. Sid Ryan is going to make one heck of a member of Parliament. I'm so proud of the folks in Oshawa and their support for Sid Ryan, let me tell you.

Mrs Carol Mitchell (Huron-Bruce): It's certainly my pleasure to rise and support the bill, and to pass on my comments to the members from London North Centre and Mississauga East. The words they shared with this House were very important. We understand clearly why and how they can support this bill moving forward. When we heard from both members about their personal experiences and what they have shared in their workplaces, it brings forward to this House the relevance of this piece of legislation moving forward. I, too, would like to share my support with the members so they understand why I believe this is a very important piece of legislation to move forward.

When we empower the people who share the work within Ontario, we promote a stronger and more vibrant Ontario. This legislation will allow the people of Ontario the ability to determine, in a greater share, their workload. How can we as members of this House not listen to the people of Ontario bring forward their concerns and translate those to the legislation that we see before us today? I too share the support and commend my fellow members on the very important discussion they brought forward today. Thank you for allowing me the time to bring that today in this House.

Mr Baird: You're the best.

Mrs Mitchell: Thank you, member from Nepean-Carleton. As he has told me repeatedly, he certainly supports the member from Huron-Bruce and the discussion we had today.

The Acting Speaker: One last question and comment.

Mr Hudak: I appreciate the chance to offer some more comment. What I didn't hear tonight was an answer to the question of how this ends the so-called 60-hour workweek in the province of Ontario. Can these 60-hour workweeks, so-called, continue if this bill is passed? Yes, absolutely. It makes not one bit of difference, not one single change. As my colleague for Nepean-Carleton said, how many labour unions have supported this bill? You'd think they would, if it did as it said it was going to do and ended the 60-hour workweek. You'd think there would be a single one. But how many are there? None, zippo, zero, goose egg, blank—not a single one.

This bill does not do what it says. It's the "emperor has no clothes" bill. Does this bill end the 60-hour workweek? No.

Mr Leal: Yes.

Mr Hudak: You say yes, member for Peterborough. In your own legislation, it allows for the 60-hour workweek, so-called, to continue. You made the argument that a worker could be coerced into working more hours than 48. So explain to me how this same worker could not be coerced into signing a simple document. If he or she is afraid of losing their job if they don't work more than 48 hours, you don't think they'd be afraid of being coerced into signing the document? Come on, give me a break. Either you're going to end the practice or you're not. Just be honest.

The reality that we all understand, and I think any rational person listening at home to the arguments today will understand, is that this bill has no substance. There is no relevance. It hires more rubber-stampers for the Ministry of Labour. That's one thing it does do. But ultimately, the emperor has no clothes.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Mississauga East has two minutes to reply.

Mr Fonseca: I'd like to thank all members in this institution of democracy here who spoke on Bill 63 today, even the member for Erie-Lincoln and the member for Nepean-Carleton. The thing that they failed to hear—maybe they weren't listening—is that what this bill does is it brings balance to the workplace between the employee and the employer. With that balance, there can be teamwork, there can be a sense of working together to make sure that you have a thriving business, but also that you have work-life balance, so that those employees do not have fear of reprisal—which they do today—and feel that they can say, "Hey, listen. I've got a life outside of the workplace."

Many members from the opposition may feel that this is their life, their only life. But others want to have a life outside the workplace, want to go to that soccer game, want to go to that wedding, want to make sure that they get to their kids' graduation. That's what this bill does.

It brings teeth to this bill. The ministry does have oversight and inspection with regard to this bill. It's not just about rubber-stamping, as the member for Nepean-Carleton mentioned. That's maybe what his party has always done, but that's not what this party will do. What this party is about is making sure that all employees in Ontario are aware of their rights and the Employment Standards Act, especially for those newcomers. They will get that awareness in the different languages that they speak.

It has been a pleasure to speak on Bill 63.

The Acting Speaker: It being just past 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tonight at 6:45 pm.

The House adjourned at 1802.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

OTHER BUSINESS

Visitors

Mrs Jeffrey 3114

Mrs Witmer 3115

Answers to written questions

Mr Sterling 3114

The Speaker..... 3114

Mrs Dombrowsky..... 3114

Gordon Mills

Mr Duncan 3118

Mr Bradley 3118

Mr O'Toole 3119

Mr Kormos 3120

TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Mardi 22 juin 2004

PREMIÈRE LECTURE

**Loi de 2004 modifiant des lois
en ce qui concerne les fiduciaires,
projet de loi 107, *M. Klees*
Adoptée 3113**

**Loi Carlie Myke et Brandon White
de 2004 (modification du Code
de la route sur la sécurité des zones
d'école, projet de loi 108, *M. Levac*
Adoptée 3114**

**Loi de 2004 modifiant le Code
de la route (casques),
projet de loi 109, *M. Levac*
Adoptée 3114**

DEUXIÈME LECTURE

**Loi de 2004 modifiant la Loi sur les
normes d'emploi (heures de travail
et autres questions),
projet de loi 63, *M. Bentley*
Débat présumé ajourné..... 3150**

CONTENTS

Tuesday 22 June 2004

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Muskoka Family Network	
Mr Miller	3111
Honeywell in Mississauga	
Mr Delaney	3111
Cancer treatment	
Mr Jackson	3111
Technology in schools	
Mrs Jeffrey	3112
Payday loan services	
Mr Runciman	3112
Automobile insurance	
Mr Bisson	3112
Northern Ontario	
Mr Oraziotti	3112
Air quality	
Ms Broten	3113
Mental health services	
Mr McNeely	3113

FIRST READINGS

Trustee Statute Law Amendment Act, 2004, Bill 107, Mr Klees	
Agreed to	3113
Mr Klees	3113
Carlie Myke and Brandon White Act (Safe School Zones Highway Traffic Amendment), 2004, Bill 108, Mr Levac	
Agreed to	3114
Mr Levac	3114
Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Helmets), 2004, Bill 109, Mr Levac	
Agreed to	3114
Mr Levac	3114

MOTIONS

House sittings	
Mr Duncan	3115
Agreed to	3115

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

Tourism	
Mr Bradley	3115
Mr Miller	3117
Mr Marchese	3118
National Aboriginal Day	
Mr Bryant	3116
Mr Tascona	3117
Mr Bisson	3117

ORAL QUESTIONS

Ontario budget	
Mr Eves	3120
Mr Sorbara	3121
Mr Klees	3121
Doctor shortage	
Mrs Witmer	3121
Mr McGuinty	3121
Health premiums	
Mr Prue	3122
Mr McGuinty	3122
Environmental protection	
Ms Churley	3123
Mrs Dombrowsky	3123
Ontario College of Teachers	
Mr Flaherty	3124
Mr McGuinty	3124
Hydro rates	
Ms Churley	3124
Mr Duncan	3124
Child pornography	
Mrs Cansfield	3125
Mr Kwinter	3125
Mr Bryant	3125
Gasoline tax	
Mr Klees	3125
Mr Takhar	3125
Automobile insurance	
Mr Bisson	3126
Mr Sorbara	3126
High technology sector	
Mrs Sandals	3126
Mr Cordiano	3126
Energy issues	
Mr O'Toole	3127
Mr Duncan	3127
Community-based mental health services	
Mr Prue	3127
Ms Pupatello	3128
Electricity supply	
Mr Fonseca	3128
Mr Duncan	3128
User fees	
Mr Ouellette	3129
Mr Sorbara	3129
School closures	
Ms Horwath	3129
Mr McGuinty	3129
PETITIONS	
Chiropractic services	
Mr Arnott	3130
Mr Qaadri	3130

Mr Eves	3130
Ms Horwath	3131
Mr Patten	3131
Mr Leal	3131
Mr Hardeman	3131
Mr Levac	3132
Mrs Witmer	3132
Mr Flynn	3133
Workers' compensation	
Mr Crozier	3130
Highway 44	
Mr Sterling	3130
Optometrists	
Mr Jackson	3131
Services for the developmentally disabled	
Mr Gravelle	3132
School facilities	
Mr Flaherty	3132
District of Muskoka	
Mr Miller	3132
Physiotherapy services	
Mrs Witmer	3133
Taxation	
Mr Miller	3133

SECOND READINGS

Employment Standards Amendment Act (Hours of Work and Other Matters), 2004, Bill 63, Mr Bentley	
Ms Broten	3133, 3137
Mr Wong	3135
Mr Chudleigh	3136, 3141
Ms Churley	3136, 3140, 3142, 3146
Mr Berardinetti	3137
Mr Hudak	3137, 3141, 3145, 3150
Mr Duguid	3141
Mr Brownell	3141
Mrs Dombrowsky	3145
Mr Kormos	3145, 3149
Mr Bentley	3146
Mr Fonseca	3146, 3150
Ms Matthews	3148
Mr Baird	3149
Mrs Mitchell	3149
Debate deemed adjourned	3150

Continued overleaf



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Tuesday 22 June 2004

Mardi 22 juin 2004



Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 22 June 2004

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 22 juin 2004

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AND BUSINESS SERVICES STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LE MINISTÈRE DES SERVICES AUX CONSOMMATEURS ET AUX ENTREPRISES

Resuming the debate adjourned on June 15, 2004, on the motion for second reading of Bill 70, An Act to amend various Acts administered by or affecting the Ministry of Consumer and Business Services / *Projet de loi 70, Loi modifiant diverses lois appliquées par ou touchant le ministère des Services aux consommateurs et aux entreprises.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr Ted Arnott): When we last discussed Bill 70, the member for Niagara Centre had the floor. As such, I recognize the member for Niagara Centre.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I've got but 30 minutes left, and for the life of me I don't know how we're going to fit a thorough discussion of this omnibus bill into a mere half hour, especially when I anticipate numerous points of order being raised—fraudulent ones, mind you—by backbenchers during the course of my comments, and any number of interruptions from people who may not particularly like what I say. Too bad, so sad.

I want to tell folks it's 6:45 pm on Tuesday. This isn't a rerun. Many folks click on to the legislative channel in the evening. When the House is sitting until 6 o'clock, at this point you're watching reruns. But no, this is the provincial Legislature live, or as live as one can get it on an evening sitting after people have been wine and dined in their respective caucus rooms. That happens from time to time. I think folks understand that. They're probably not unsympathetic.

I referred to this legislation as—and it is—a dusty old piece, a hodgepodge of dusty old Tory amendments that have been sitting on the shelf for Lord knows how long, well past their expiration date. In a stricter regime around consumer protection, this expired date, shelved item would have been discarded.

For instance, the section dealing with amendments to the process of categorizing films: It's redundant under the province's film classification system. The Glad Day Books ruling made it quite clear that this government has to revisit the whole act.

So here we are, we have a government that has before us as part of this bill an amendment to the legislation, the Theatres Act, that is for naught. It's irrelevant what we do with it in this bill because the Theatres Act has to be revisited in its entirety. The court made it very clear that the province has the power to classify films, but not the power to censor films. Whether people like it or not, that is the law. That law has been accepted by this government. The Attorney General, in one of the wiser moves taken by an Attorney General for a long time in this province, saw fit not to appeal it because he saw the wisdom of the ruling.

Some tired, old consumer protection rewrites, some amendments to any number of commercial pieces of legislation—what this House really is crying out for is a response to the startling revelations made in the *Toronto Star* in a series of articles. I know you read them because you are, Speaker, a learned member. You read. You read the papers. You, as I did, read the series of articles by Nicole MacIntyre and Jim Rankin, reporters for the *Toronto Star*. They were shocking; they were disturbing. The articles revealed the existence of an above-ground loansharking scheme run by a low-life here in the province of Ontario, apparently with impunity, charging usurious interest rates to hapless victims whose sole crime was not making enough money, not making high enough incomes to carry them through from one week to the next. I look forward to the time when this government says, if it does, that it's going to address that.

1850

Let's understand the phenomenon of these Money Marts. They're all over big-city and small-town Ontario. They promise to advance money on your next paycheque, your income tax return or, I suppose, any other thing you can legitimately establish you're going to be entitled to in the relatively near future and, in the process, rip you off for huge amounts of money by way of interest rates, far in excess of what the Criminal Code allows.

There was a time in this province's history when banks—and I'm not a fan of banks. I never have been and never will be, ever since the Toronto-Dominion Bank ripped me off. Did I tell you the story about the Toronto-Dominion? I have to tell people that if you have bank accounts at the Toronto-Dominion, empty the bank

accounts right now. I've told this Legislature before. TD Bank: thieves.

I recall going to the TD Bank here in Toronto and expecting to see a few hundred dollars in there—more than a few hundred dollars. I recall it was back when I was in the bar admission course here in downtown Toronto. I kept a bank account because I was living in Toronto during that bar admission course. I had deposited some money in this bank account. I used automatic banking machines to make withdrawals; you need them from time to time. There was darned near a thousand bucks in the account.

I confess, I hadn't visited the account for a few years—more than a few—but when I went to the bank, lo and behold, not only is there no money left, but they told me I owed them money. You see, there were several hundred bucks in this bank account—the TD Bank in downtown Toronto—and they nickel-and-dimed several hundred dollars worth of deposit to zip, zero, nada, nothing. The banks are thieves. Talk about organized crime.

Interjection.

Mr Kormos: Nothing there, Speaker. Look to the table all you want. There's nothing there yet.

Talk about organized crime. Surely, next to the Senate, the banks have got to be at the top of the list.

There was a point in our history when banks didn't do consumer loans. Those were the days—you're not old enough to remember them. I'm just barely old enough to remember them, and there are a few people in here who are old enough to remember them well. Those were the days of the finance companies. Finance companies would do consumer loans because the banks weren't in the business. Mind you, this is before the tremendous growth—I'm telling you, forget the banks, especially the Toronto-Dominion Bank. Talk about a gang of thieves.

Get your money out of the Toronto-Dominion Bank right now, especially people who aren't inclined to visit their bank regularly. The first thing they should do tomorrow is go to the Toronto-Dominion Bank and withdraw their money. It's just a word of warning. It's a little consumer protection alert, if you will. Toronto-Dominion Bank steals your money. You could have money in a Toronto-Dominion Bank account, show up a few years later and owe them money. I know; I've got the documentation. By God, they did it to me. I got walloped by the Toronto-Dominion Bank. Imagine what they'd do to somebody who may be getting on in years and isn't quite as full of energy as they were 20 years ago. Imagine what they do to senior citizens. I know all the banks nickel and dime you to death. Thank goodness for the credit unions.

Talk about an era when the finance companies prevailed in this province. They were issuing consumer loans, you'll remember, of 20% plus: furniture, appliances. They were getting kickbacks from the retailers, who were writing their paper for them. Almost inevitably, what the finance company would do was sell your paper the minute you left the office so that there was no more remedy against them. Similarly, retailers who were

financing stuff sold the paper the minute you left so that, for instance, you could no longer stop making payments in the event the chesterfield you bought fell apart within months, never mind maybe even weeks, of buying it.

These are real low-life scumbags operating these Money Marts, ripping off some of the lowest-income, poorest, most vulnerable people in our community. It also speaks to the fact, though, that there's a huge chunk of our families, friends, co-workers and neighbours whose incomes are simply inadequate to carry them through from one week to the next. These people get caught up in this horrible, vicious cycle. I suppose middle-class people do it too. They do it with 18.5% or 18.9% credit cards and advances.

I read the shocking news as you did, over and over again, talking about consumer debt, household debt in this province and this country at all-time highs. Look, right now interest rates are at all-time lows. They're probably as low as they've been in my lifetime—all-time lows—and people have been relatively benign about borrowing money and getting advances on some of the so-called low-interest credit cards. But they're carrying huge debt loads, and when those interest rates rise, there is going to be a huge flow of bankruptcies.

So what we're looking to this government for—I said it yesterday to the Toronto Star, and a leading senior Conservative member of the Legislature said it today during members' statements—is rather than dried up, dusty, old Tory legislation, why isn't this minister coming forward with legislation that addresses these rip-off artists operating these Money Marts? Why isn't the minister downstairs in the press gallery media room holding a press conference announcing how the ministry has hired back however many of the investigators it used to have, oh, years and years ago?

Did you ever try calling the Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations, as it used to be called? Mr Gravelle, have you called them lately? You're not a fan of "Press one of if you want this, press two if you want this, press three if you want this," and then leaving a recorded message and maybe somebody gets back to you. The ministry, in terms of enforcement, is almost non-existent. It is but a shadow of its former self. It's the ghost of the Ministry of Consumer and Consumer Relations. It's a virtual ministry, I suppose. You know, you dial—you don't even dial any more; you punch the buttons—and then you get a number and they say, "Press one, press two, press three, press four," and once you get to that, you get into subsets of one, two, three and four, and then you have to spell out the name of the person you are trying to reach, or press X number for the directory, and inevitably the person you want to reach isn't on the directory.

So that's what I would be interested in—I was just amazed. Of course, one of the other problems in enforcement is, if the ministry isn't going to enforce it—because the ministry has no enforcement team, no investigative officers—police officers are hard pressed to enforce any laws trying to clamp down on these Money Mart rip-off,

advance-money-on-your-paycheque schemes. Scams—that's what they are. Police forces don't have the staffing, the resources, to embark on the forensic accounting and the paper trail.

You read the article. Talk about people, these offshore Caribbean corporations owning companies that own companies that own companies. Talk about people hiding behind a succession of numbered corporations.

It was an awful disappointment. I waited patiently Monday, waited patiently today during ministerial statements for this minister to stand up and say that he and his Ministry of Consumer and Business Services were going to clamp down on these rip-off artists with the Money Marts. You know, my view is you shut them down. Just eliminate them, abolish them. And if somehow there are some people around who think they are a necessary evil, then at least regulate the daylights out of them; just control them to no end.

But at the same time during that debate, we have to have a discussion about how irrelevant this government's increase in the minimum wage was. You understand the connection? There is a connection. People earning pathetically low incomes have to borrow against next week's paycheque and pay out huge chunks—it was called vigorish in the old days, the vig. You know, the street mobster, the loan shark, was charging you interest on the interest, and basically all you were paying was the interest, so you never paid off the capital, and interest accumulated on the interest. It was called vigorish, and the vig was huge. The vig is huge with these guys. Your odds of coming out ahead are better if you buy one of those 13-million-to-one odds 6/49 lottery tickets.

I recall that when the minister commenced his remarks he kept referring to the brother from the IBEW, the president of the IBEW in the members' gallery. I want to talk specifically about licensing electricians and make it clear that there are no qualms on the part of the New Democratic Party about the need to regulate and license that important, long-standing trade, and surely to get rid of the checkerboarding of the province that imposes requirements on municipality after municipality that, before electricians can practise their trade in that municipality, they be a master electrician, having passed the standards of that municipality, when in fact that electrician may well have passed standards and paid for licences in any number of other municipalities.

1900

I'm concerned once again—so are New Democrats—about this government's eagerness, rather than to accept responsibility for licensing these same electricians. I've read the references coming from the public auditor that express concern about the inadequacy of standards around electrical contractors and electrical installers that this government argues was the genesis of its move to license these electricians. But I'll be darned if I'm going to go back to my community—and why should you go back to yours? Why should you go back over to Highway 6, Ferguson—those beautiful communities there along old, historic Highway 6—and tell hard-working elec-

tricians in your community that all of a sudden they're going to get whacked again with another fee, another charge, another licensing requirement? Are you interested in doing that? Are you interested in explaining to that electrician in your community, working real hard raising his or her family, that they have to cough up another couple of hundred dollars for their annual licence fee? Are you interested in that? I don't think so. I'm going to be hard-pressed to explain to electricians in my community who are entrepreneurs that they've got to cough up more money.

Quite frankly, that's the sort of thing, the boondoggle, that Liberals told Ontarians and Canadians when it came to the gun registry, wasn't it? How many billions of dollars did the federal Liberals blow in that gun registry now? How many billions? Two billion bucks that the federal Liberals have blown in that wacky, nutso, stupid gun registry? Back in the old days I used to be a criminal defence lawyer and I acted for a whole lot of people that did bad things with guns. I used to act for bikers, bad people and bank robbers, the whole nine yards, and not one of those people ever committed a crime with a gun that they had registered—honest. It just boggles the mind. So here you've got the federal Liberals ripping off hard-working folks across Canada to the tune of \$2 billion with their gun registry, and we've got the prospect of hard-working tradespeople in this province being ripped off because the government has abandoned responsibility for its role in licensing and regulating. It has; it's going to pass this off to an arm's-length organization, the old arm's-length stuff.

I suppose the real test is, how would Frank Pirillo respond? You know, Frank Pirillo, Thorold; he just turned 90 years old. He was over at his daughter's place in Niagara Falls on Sunday afternoon, and I was able to drop by for just a few minutes. All his children were there, and his grandchildren, and they had a pig roast. The pig was just about finished by the time I had to leave, but I did have some bacon on a bun. The bacon was good; the bun wasn't good. The bun wasn't part of South Beach regimen. But old Frank Pirillo, let me tell you, is a wonderful old gentleman. He and his wife just turned 90. He's a delightful, delightful person. I'm so pleased to have him as a friend. I was at his house just a couple of weeks ago. His kids were in its backyard, working on the garden. The garden is bigger than the house. It is. You've been in those gardens, haven't you? Go back in August, like I intend to go back to visit Frank Pirillo, and you'll come back with a six-quart basket full of tomatoes, hot peppers and a whole bunch of other things.

The real test for this stuff isn't how the little minions behind the Speaker respond; it's how Frank Pirillo responds. You put a proposition like this to Frank Pirillo and he just shakes his head and says, "People work too hard. I've worked too hard. I've worked with too many women and men who have worked too hard to have their pockets picked yet once again by the government." Frank Pirillo is a progressive. He knows that there should be a

progressive income tax system. He's not pleased about the Liberals' attack on low-income and middle-income people and on seniors. Frank Pirillo has worked hard and long enough in his life and he knows he's blessed. He saved; he sacrificed. His kids are all bright and well-educated; his grandchildren are even better-educated and doing really well. But Frank Pirillo and his wife sacrificed; they went without. You know the kinds of folks they are; I know you do.

Eating in restaurants wasn't part of their lifestyle. They just didn't. You saved your money. If you were hungry, you made something to eat at home. You didn't go to a restaurant. Even more so than that, if you wanted something to eat, you didn't go to the supermarket and buy it; you grew it. They still do it.

Frank Pirillo is a senior citizen, 90 years old. He worked hard all of his life, built this community of Thorold, built this province, built this country, and he's being told that he's got to pay more taxes. He's got to pay more taxes. He was told by Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals that he's got to pay more taxes to pay for health premiums.

Mr Pirillo remembers the fight to build medicare. He was one of the people in the very front lines of that battle. He was a progressive, and as a progressive he was an advocate for public health care for all of his life in this country. He remembers that struggle. He knew that it was going to take investment. He was prepared to pay his fair share of investment and he did, by the way of his taxes.

Now he sees his pocket being picked, and Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals telling him that they need money to sustain health care, and then learning, as folks across this province did—notwithstanding the radio ads, Ms Horwath, by Mr McGuinty wherein Mr McGuinty repeated that inaccurate comment. I'm on safe ground, aren't I? I can say "inaccurate comment." Do you know what I mean, though? "Inaccurate comment" is like a code word for language that would otherwise be unparliamentary.

So Mr McGuinty, Premier, Liberal leader, province of Ontario, told voters in this province anything he felt he had to get elected, and he did. He did tell them anything he felt he had to and he did get elected, both. First of all during the election campaign—Speaker, do you remember?—Dalton McGuinty, the Liberal, said, "We will not raise your taxes; cross my heart and hope to die." He did the Boy Scout stuff, the whole nine yards. Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals said, "Cross our hearts and hope to die, we will not raise your taxes." Well, they did.

He signed the piece of paper. I don't know whether he used a pen, a magic marker, a crayon, a piece of chalk or whatever, but he signed "Dalton McGuinty" with that Canadian Taxpayers Federation group, promising on a stack of bibles, promising on his oath, on his word—Dalton McGuinty—that he was not going to raise taxes, but he did. Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals have tried to convince people, tried oh, so fecklessly—"Oh, we didn't mean to—" What? Did they have their fingers crossed while they made the promise? Is that what the

scoop is: Cross your fingers when you promise something like that and it doesn't count any more?

People counted on that promise when they voted for the Liberals. What they've learned since is that you can't believe a darn thing Liberals say. You can't believe Liberals. They promise not to raise taxes and they do. Then they promise that those tax increases are designed to pay, every penny of them, for health care. That's what the radio ads said too. There's Dalton McGuinty, hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth of radio ads, telling folks that every penny of that health premium tax is going to go to health care.

What do Howard Hampton and the New Democrats discover and reveal? That it's not the case; not so; simply not accurate; not factual. It is a misstatement of the facts. You thought I was going to say "misrepresentation," didn't you? You were on the edge of your seat there, Speaker, because you thought I was going to say "misrepresentation," and I said "misstatement." Come on; after all these years of having been chastised by so many Speakers, do you think I'm going to screw up and say that Dalton McGuinty misrepresented? No, I'm not going to say that. I'm going to say he misstated the facts, because that's parliamentary for the moment—"misstate the facts."

Dalton McGuinty said that every penny of this new, regressive tax was going to go to health care, and it don't. It don't; it don't; it don't. He never intended it to. Ms Horwath from Hamilton East knows this. She has read that budget forward, backward, upside down, inside out. Next year there is going to be even more money from that new Liberal tax on low- and middle-income people, including a whole lot of seniors like Frank Pirillo from Thorold, and even less of it is going to go to health care.

1910

Why? It was the Liberals who privatized optometrists. The Tories, in eight years, did some horrible things. They put the fear of all get-out into the hearts and minds of a whole lot of Ontarians around the survival of public health care, but even the Tories didn't privatize health care the way the Liberals privatized optometrists and the way they privatized physiotherapists and the way they privatized chiropractic services.

What comes next? Folks, you know you can't trust the Liberals. You know they say one thing and do another. You know you can't believe Liberals. Dalton McGuinty has set the standard for Liberals, and it's low. It is subterranean low. It's the subterranean standard, the McGuinty subterranean standard for accuracy, the new subterranean standard for keeping promises.

Even some of his own backbenchers railed against him in their ridings, didn't they, Mr Leal? Because they were a little taken aback. They realized, "Uh-oh this breaking of promises by Mr McGuinty casts a long shadow," even all the way to Peterborough. Mr Leal, a clever politician in his own right, says, "I don't want to be tarred with that same brush. Not me. Maybe Dalton McGuinty ain't going to keep his promises, but I would like you folks to think that I'm still going to keep mine."

Mr Craitor from Niagara Falls, talking to the Niagara Falls Review, said, "I'm going to hammer my fist on the table"—I'm paraphrasing now—"I'm going to go back to Queen's Park and I'm going to straighten this out. I'm going to get those privatized health care services put back on the OHIP listing." Well, I don't know how hard that gentleman from Niagara Falls pounded the table. I don't know how loudly he expressed his resentment at being drawn into this promise-breaking.

You see the problem is, you can't believe Liberals, so you don't know even when they say publicly, "I'm going to go back there and I'm going to insist that Dalton McGuinty reverses his decision to privatize health care." You can't believe them when they say that. You don't know that they're really going to do it. Maybe they're just saying it the same way Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals told you that they weren't going to raise your taxes during the election so that you would vote for them. Maybe those Liberals who are going back to their ridings and saying, "I'm going to raise Cain about the privatization"—the Liberals privatized health care: optometrists, chiropractic and physiotherapy.

What's next? I tell you, I'm afraid. I'm afraid for the future of health care in this province—the future of public health care. Oh yes, there will always be health care. You know the story. It will be American-style health care, just like right now. The optometrists didn't get shut down. They just got privatized. So you see, before, when you needed optometric services, you could use your health card because, Lord knows, you paid enough taxes. Now you need hard, cold cash. You see? You've got to have the cash. It's the American way.

The Acting Speaker: Will the member for Niagara Centre please put away the props.

Mr Kormos: So the American way is you gotta pay cash. It's cash on the dash if you want that health care.

What's Dalton McGuinty's Liberal Ontario? It is cash on the dash if you want optometric services. Why, if you want chiropractic services, you've got to pay. If you want physiotherapy, you've got to pay again.

Are you going to have the Sergeant-at-Arms seize this money?

The Acting Speaker: I'd like you to put it back in your pocket. Thank you.

Mr Kormos: The Sergeant-at-Arms would rather seize it. He was eyeing it. Not in an enviable way, but he thought, "Hey, it would be a novel proposition. It would shorten Kormos's evening significantly, wouldn't it?" I presume he would give it back to me.

Can you believe a word that the Liberals say? If you can't believe the provincial Liberals, can you believe the federal Liberals? If you can't believe the provincial Liberals—you know you can't believe them because they have proven themselves to break promises and to privatize health care—can you believe the federal Liberals? Can you believe Paul Martin?

Can you believe Liberals in ridings like Halton, this fellow Gary Carr, who has made it clear he's a Liberal? I figure that poor Gary has sided now with the promise-

breakers. Poor Gary has sided with the people who break their promises. Poor Gary has sided with the people who say anything they have to to get elected, having no intention of keeping any of those promises.

Can you believe any Liberal? We know you can't believe provincial Liberals, because they have proven themselves to break their promises, to say anything they have to. The obvious, logical conclusion is that you can't believe Paul Martin and the federal Liberals either, that Paul Martin is no more to be trusted with public health care than was Dalton McGuinty. If Dalton McGuinty privatizes, Paul Martin will privatize more.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Ms Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): I always listen with rapt attention to my colleague Peter Kormos and his very detailed description of any piece of legislation being debated here. I found some of his comments quite interesting, particularly around the places where people tend to receive their paycheques and things a little bit early. I can tell you that in Hamilton that's a big problem. Certainly the people who are, as Mr Kormos mentioned, most vulnerable to these kinds of facilities are people who tend to be of lower income, people who tend to not be able to make ends meet.

I would agree with Mr Kormos that one of the reasons people are put in this situation is because, even though they elect governments that promise not to raise taxes, lo and behold, taxes are raised. This is something that people are experiencing as we speak; in fact, coming up within, I believe, a week or so, when the new health tax is foisted upon the people of Ontario. I can tell you that the people in the riding I represent are very concerned, because they simply cannot afford the extra burden on their household income that this tax represents.

We have a situation where, on the one hand, the government is trying to regulate or clean up, if you will, through an omnibus bill, a number of things that we would think would be consumer protection related, but what the government is really doing, on the other hand, is reducing the purchasing power of consumers by foisting taxes on them that are not affordable, and doing it in a regressive way that even further challenges those who are most vulnerable and most unable to pay, through the health tax.

1920

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

The member for Niagara Centre has two minutes to reply.

Mr Kormos: Not a single Liberal dares stand to speak to this bill. They've been thoroughly whipped. A whip just walked back and forth and said, "Sh, don't say a word." Even though you're paid minimum wage, \$85,000; medium wage, somewhere around \$99,000 and \$100,000. Anywhere between \$85,000 and \$130,00—I don't know. Ms Broten, what does a parliamentary assistant make? Another \$15,000?

All the hooting and hollering about sitting evenings, and not a Liberal wants to get on their feet and speak to this bill or to the issues that it embraces. Talk about

getting ripped off. Your constituents are getting ripped off. You should explain to your constituents why you're not taking—"Oh, the House leaders' meeting. Oh, Pete"—I know the government House leader is trying to do a number when he calls me Pete. "Oh, Pete, our people are upset because they don't get enough time to speak on the floor." Horse feathers. You guys have all been turned into capons.

Interjection.

Mr Kormos: You have. You know what happens when they do that process? You start bloating, right? It's a shame, but it's just one of the realities, and they've done it to you. They've performed the surgery. What a shame.

Your constituents want to know why they're watching this great legislative network channel now—by happenstance, I'm sure, as much as by anything else—saying, "Where are the Liberals speaking to this bill?" They're all sitting here. Heck, this is only the second day of debate on this bill? Whoops. Where are all the Liberals speaking to this bill? Are they planning junkets? Are they busy, preoccupied with other things? Are they just preoccupied or are they disinterested? It's interesting. We shall see.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Ms Horwath: I've been studying the bill at hand and find that although there is a lot of information in the bill—

Interjection: Here it is.

Ms Horwath: I have it, actually. Thank you. I was just given a copy, but I can have one in each hand. That's great. I guess that is not considered a prop if it's actually a bill, is that right? I'm learning still.

As I was looking through it, I found that although much of it appears to be rather innocuous, one of the things I noticed almost immediately was the number of times the bill refers to the ability of the minister to set fees and charges. I was looking through and I believe that on page 11 was the first time I noticed it, in regard to bailiffs. Let me just see here; yes, the Bailiffs Act, on page 11. It very clearly states that one of the things this bill does is:

"The minister may, by order,

"(a) require the payment of fees for applications or other services under this act and approve the amount of those fees;

"(b) set one or more registration periods for which an applicant for registration or renewal of registration may apply under this act and approve a different application fee for each registration period."

The next one I believe I saw on page 14, and that's under a different act. Of course, people watching will know and understand that this is an omnibus bill. What that means is, there are several pieces of legislation that are being amended by virtue of this bill. I could name them off. There are some—I don't even know how many—starting with the Athletics Control Act; going through the Bs—Bailiffs Act, Business Names Act; through the Cs—several of them there—Cemeteries Act,

Consumer Reporting Act; Electricity Act; Land Titles Act; Theatres Act, Travel Industry Act and so on.

The next section that talks about fees is merely two or three pages later, under the section that deals with the Collection Agencies Act. Here we are, section 29.1:

"The minister may by order require the payment of a fee for any of the following matters and may approve the amount of the fee:

"1. For processing an application for registration or renewal of registration under this act.

"2. For processing a notice given under subsection 20(1) or (2) with respect to commencement or termination of the employment of a collector."

There we are again with more fees and more fees. It's ironic, because we heard from my colleague Peter Kormos, a little bit earlier, his serious concerns with these cheque-cashing facilities, these facilities that of course are harming, more than not, people of low income, people who find it very difficult to make it from one payday to the next. Then of course the bill ironically also has in it several added fees. Then you add on top of that the increased taxes that this government has foisted upon people in the form of a health tax, and you will see that this government has a serious problem in terms of understanding that many people who live in Ontario are seeing their quality of life being reduced. And their quality of life is being reduced why? Well, their quality of life is being reduced, quite frankly, because every time they turn around, either a promise is being broken, a tax is being implemented or a fee is being increased.

We have people who had thought—much to their dismay, it didn't happen—that there might actually be some action taken on a government promise. In fact, at that time it wasn't even a government promise, I don't think. It was simply an election promise by the party that was elected to govern back in October, and that promise was around auto insurance rates. It seems to me the people of Ontario were fully expecting that auto insurance rates would not go up, that in fact they would be capped, they would be reduced, and that didn't happen.

I seem to recall—and certainly heard from people in Hamilton East—that another thing they had expected was that hydro rates would be capped, and that cap would stay on for a certain period of time. Of course, that was another promise that was broken.

When you look at that kind of thing, you see that when the government is breaking its promises, it's costing people more money. Then when the government makes up new things that they didn't promise, when they invent initiatives that they didn't ask the people, that they didn't float with the people during an election campaign, in fact, when they come up with things like a health tax, like an increased amount of money off of everyone's paycheque—unfortunately, off of people who are least able to pay at a higher proportion than off of those who are most able to pay—and you couple that with omnibus bills that are full of extra fees and charges, you end up with a number of Ontarians who are not happy with the way things are happening in Ontario.

Quite frankly, I don't blame them. The people I represent in Hamilton East are some of the lowest-income people in Ontario. It's very easy for many members of this Legislature to sit back in our quite well-paid positions that we have, as Mr Kormos mentioned a little bit earlier, and not understand the real effect that these kinds of fee increases and taxes have on people in their everyday lives. That's a bit of a concern. In fact, it is an extremely major concern for someone like me, because people in Hamilton East are hanging on by their fingernails. Those kinds of situations are exactly what force people into places like cheque-cashing facilities, which this bill is at least attempting in some ways to address and regulate.

The other thing that's in the bill is, again, more fees and requirements—and I think Mr Kormos also raised that one—around licensing requirements. I think everybody would agree that the safety of contractors, the safety of electrical contractors, the safety of people who are working, particularly with something like electricity, which can be extremely dangerous, is very important. So there are many things we can say about that in a positive vein. However, the bottom line is that the ability to build a safety regime is much more than what's being done in this bill. This bill is scratching the surface of a lot of different things without really making significant changes in any one area. It speaks to issues like the Theatres Act, the Electricity Act. There are just many of them—athletics and all kinds of things.

What I'm understanding from discussions with my caucus is that this bill is simply a recycling of dusty old pieces of legislation that have been sitting around for many years. Of course, I wouldn't know that from personal review because I haven't been here myself, sitting on a shelf, getting dusty, but apparently some of this legislation has. What we need to get at is that if there are going to be attempts to change the regime—some of these industries, some of these trades that people in their everyday lives are dealing with, whether it's cheque-cashing or electricity—we need to do it in a way that, first of all, is consultative—and my understanding is there wasn't much consultation with any of this—but also in a way that's holistic, that really takes the time and makes the effort to overhaul these things and not simply throw them all together in a hodgepodge, mishmash of an omnibus bill that has all kinds of different bits and pieces that are tied in together.

1930

Then of course, as I had mentioned earlier, the piece that's interesting—and I haven't actually had enough time to ferret out every single new fee and every single opportunity for an extra fee and an extra charge. I'm sure the rest of the bill is riddled with these kinds of things. It's really difficult for me, as a representative of the riding that I represent, to try to explain to people why it is that this government continues at every turn to try to find ways of increasing revenues, particularly in a way that's not progressive. We all know that fees and charges are simply a tax by another name, a tax with another

particular—what should I say?—coating on it that's not obvious as a tax, but it's a fee.

I come from the municipal sector. I know very well that fees, charges and those kinds of things are often used as a way to gain revenue and pretend that we're really not raising taxes. Unfortunately, the same things that I fought against in the municipal sector in regard to fees and charges that are levied upon people, as opposed to providing very clear and transparent changes through taxes, are being done here in this forum as well. Although I'm not surprised, it is rather disappointing.

Fees and charges like that are regressive. They don't take into consideration the ability of a person to pay; they simply provide the same fee for everyone. So if you're making 6 bucks an hour, 7 bucks an hour, you pay the same fee as if you were making \$100,000 a year—or \$40 an hour or whatever that figure turns out to be. So you can see how someone who is earning a very low income is paying far more as a proportion of their income when it comes to fees and charges that are levied, as opposed to things that are much more progressive, like income tax, but income tax that is progressive in regard to the amount a person has to pay; unlike the health tax that was brought forward by this government, which is not very progressive, and which we've said many times in this Legislature is a health tax that unfortunately sees some of the lower-income people—a single mum earning about \$30,000 having a 24% increase in her taxes, as opposed to someone in the \$100,000 range or more, who has a very small percentage—less than 2%—increase in their taxes as a result of that fee or that health tax increase.

Governments have choices when it comes to these kinds of things. We can choose. It's funny; talk to anybody these days and they will bemoan the fact that in Canada—in fact, in Ontario—we are seeing what we call the loss of the middle class. The middle class is disappearing, and we're seeing an increase on both ends of the scale. We're seeing larger numbers of people who are extremely wealthy and larger numbers of people who are extremely poor, and we're having a loss of the middle class. Why are we having that? Well, it's not by accident that that happens. It's not an accident that we lose the middle class. It's because governments make real choices about things like taxation, about things like fees and charges, about things like what we've seen being debated in this Legislature for the last couple of months.

I think the people of Ontario did make a choice back in October, a choice they thought was going to address some of the huge disparities that were coming down the pike in regard to the income levels of Ontarians. And you know what? I think they are sorely disappointed. In fact, knock on any door in the context of this federal election and you'll see people saying not only are they disappointed that the provincial Liberal government has not followed through on their promises in regard to things like reducing hydro rates, protecting them from skyrocketing insurance, things like natural gas and the cost of gas at the gas pumps, people were expecting the government to be proactive. They had elected a new

government to be proactive in their interests, and they didn't get that.

Similarly, we're seeing the same kind of concern as we knock on doors during this federal election, where people are a little bit worried that if a federal Liberal government were elected, the same kind of thing would happen. There are lots of promises being made, lots of concerns being raised. However, they're also concerned that should that government be elected, they're not going to listen to the people. They're not going to do what they say they're going to do. They're not going to address the increasing income disparity in this country.

I worked in the social justice field for a very long time in my previous capacity, prior to being elected, and I can recall 10, 15, 20 years ago talking about the trend toward income disparity, toward the loss of the middle class. That was 15, 20 years ago. In fact, very few people were talking about that then—very few. Nowadays, however, my mum meets people on the bus—why on the bus? Because she can't afford to drive. She takes public transit. She's a senior citizen. She can't afford the taxes, she can't afford the fees, she can't afford the new health tax. She can't afford to drive; she takes the bus.

On the bus you have regular people, who would never have talked about those kinds of issues before, talking about the problem that we have with a society that's becoming more and more polarized. You can see it in the way people elect governments. They're swinging back and forth because they really don't know whom to believe any more.

I think governments do have an opportunity to really make a difference in the way that people experience their life or their time in Ontario. Unfortunately, the way it's happening now is simply a continuation of what the previous government in Ontario had done, and that was to favour the people with higher incomes and to have less favour for people with lower incomes, and therefore continue to exacerbate this gap between the rich and the poor that we have been seeing for a decade or more in Ontario, as well as in Canada.

It's unfortunate that when there are real opportunities, like Bill 70, to try to redress some of these concerns, instead it's just a listing of more fees. It's just a matter of taking little bits and pieces of legislation that have been floating around for quite some time and putting that forward as extremely important, when we really know that the important things to people are the things that affect their daily lives. Those things include not only the issues I've already raised around hydro rates and things like that, but they include places like the cheque-cashing institutions, like the one Mr Kormos was raising, where people are subjected to pretty much highway robbery in an attempt just to make ends meet. These Money Marts, these facilities are real pariahs on society. They are highway robbers, and they are robbing poor people just because these poor people are trying to make ends meet.

There was an opportunity for a proactive approach, for real, strict regulation around this kind of industry, and unfortunately that opportunity was lost. Perhaps it's the

early days of this government, and perhaps they will reconsider and at some point support some other legislation in regard to the regulation of this industry, but really, the idea here is that there is an opportunity to support and to equalize or at least to start moving the pendulum in the other direction in regard to the polarizing of the rich and the poor in our society. There are real opportunities to do that. There are real opportunities to protect the interests of consumers. That is, quite frankly, the bottom line.

This bill speaks to the protection of consumers, the Consumer Protection Act, and really doesn't do much at all to protect consumers. Consumers would be very much protected if the governments they elected were looking after their interests as opposed to the interests of the big corporations and particularly these fly-by-night—not even fly-by-night; that's the wrong word—these unsavoury organizations, these unsavoury facilities like these cheque-cashing places. It's very disturbing that when there are real opportunities to make those significant inroads, we see a tinkering around the edges, we see a little bit of this and a little bit of that, in a number of different bills.

So you have a number of different acts that are being amended, from the Athletics Control Act all the way through the Bailiffs Act, the Business Corporations Act—and the list goes on and on—the Land Titles Act, all the way down to the Travel Industry Act. When you take all of these things together, yes, it's a lot of words and it's a lot of clauses and it's a lot of tweaking or twinging of various pieces of legislation, but as a whole, I think it really misses the mark, not so much in terms of doing nothing but probably more along the lines of not doing enough, of a lost opportunity to really take on some of these things and instead to do a lot of tinkering, as well as to provide for more fees, charges and opportunities for the government, once again in the most regressive way, to burden those least able to pay.

1940

That's an unfortunate thing, particularly in the context of all the other financial issues and burdens that are being put on the people of Ontario, whether through skyrocketing auto insurance—in fact, I've had two calls just this week from people who have received their renewal notice, and they are just floored by the increase they're receiving. Those are the kinds of things that need to be regulated by this government: spiralling auto insurance rates, spiralling hydro rates, gasoline prices at the pumps which we cannot rely on because they fluctuate wildly, particularly as we get toward long weekends in the summer. We all know how that goes. Those are the things that can really protect people and those would be real consumer protections.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Kormos: I want to commend Ms. Horwath, the member for Hamilton East, for her thorough analysis of this legislation. In but a sparse 20 minutes, she has been able to canvass every element of this omnibus bill, wide-ranging issues. She has been able to present it in a way

that people can understand, that people can identify with. She's made it very, very clear.

Hon Jim Watson (Minister of Consumer and Business Services): Point of order, Mr Speaker.

Mr Kormos: Fraudulent point of order.

The Acting Speaker: The Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations.

Hon Mr Watson: Is it possible to reset the clock?

The Acting Speaker: Relax. I'll look after the clock. The member for Niagara Centre.

Mr Kormos: Ms Horwath displays—this is why we're so grateful that the folks in Hamilton East sent her here to Queen's Park. She reads this legislation, she digests it, she analyzes it. She was able to refer to the bulk of this legislation without even having to open the pages of the bill because she's got it up here; she's got it stored away. She is one of the hardest-working new members I've ever seen. I know she's going to be here at 8 am tomorrow morning for her boards, agencies, commissions committee. Here's one hardworking MPP, the member for Hamilton East.

Unlike the Liberals, she's not afraid to get to her feet and speak to this legislation. Andrea Horwath's folks back in Hamilton East are getting their money's worth. Ms Horwath has nothing to apologize for. Folks from Hamilton East are watching their member of the Legislature on her feet in this Parliament engaging in debate.

There's a whole lot of constituents of a whole lot of Liberal members who are saying, "Where's my member?" It's like Where's Waldo? You know those pictures? If you have kids, grandkids, you've got to show them where Waldo is. Where's Waldo? Where's the Liberal?

Liberals want to sit evenings, but don't want to debate. Maybe they can't. Maybe they don't understand the legislation. Maybe they're too lazy to read the legislation. Maybe their supptime was simply too intense for them to risk rising to their feet at this time of the day. Maybe their supptime was just a little too long and a little too diverse in how the table was set for them to dare stand and attempt to engage in any sort of meaningful dialogue here.

I feel sorry for the ridings represented by Liberals. Those people are getting short-changed tonight. Folks in Hamilton East didn't get short-changed. Andrea Horwath delivered.

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): I cannot sit here tonight and listen to the diatribe, the pretending by the NDP, who say they are really for workers, for the people. This particular bill will contribute to people within your riding, member for Niagara Centre, and your riding, member for Hamilton East. To see the diatribe of theatrics—which is what it is. The people watching do not know that the opposition will stand there and just talk about one thing or another and not deal with the substance of this particular bill. This bill deals with a lot of issues that help electricians be able to move around the province, help workers get jobs throughout Ontario and help employment. It contributes to your riding and everybody's riding throughout Ontario.

I want you to know that this particular bill is very important. It's very complex and there are a lot of issues that have to do with housekeeping. What does that mean? It means, you help to make it easier to do what you want to do, and that's to help people be employed—people who are able to be standardized as electricians, for example—and move from one area of the province to another, rather than being divided as before, and can find employment and support employment throughout Ontario.

I just want to say, before my good friends from the NDP continue to attack us in terms of some of these particular issues, talk about the substance of the bill and you will find in there something that will be helpful to the people within your own riding. They will get more employment—

Interjection.

Mr Patten: You can say that as much as you like, but you know this as well as I do. Speaker, I just had to say that. I want you to know: Deal with the substance of the bill.

Mr Kormos: Who dat?

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): Who dat? That's what I wanted to find out.

This bill is going to do so many things for the workers of Ontario. For example, it's going to help the travel industry make sure that Air Canada, should it go bankrupt, won't put poor travel agents in despair from having to issue out tickets from Air Canada.

Mr Patten: Doomsday, doomsday.

Mr Bisson: Doomsday? Why did you put it in the bill? The member gets up and says, "Oh, my god, look at this." We have to stand here and allow this bill to go right through the House without any kind of debate, without any kind of scrutiny. All of a sudden the party that in the last election said, "Oh, my god, we have to have debate. We have to increase democracy in Ontario," doesn't want to debate its own legislation. I just say, come on, get up and have a speech.

I want to say up front that there are things in this bill that we as New Democrats can support. In fact, I can speak with some authority. I am an electrician. I understand what this stuff is all about. I've contracted. I understand what it is.

Mr Kormos: He's wired.

Mr Bisson: I'm wired, as my good friend Mr Kormos says.

There are things in this bill that are supportive. The government says it wants to help workers when it comes to the electrical trade. One of the things that we have to do is strengthen the apprenticeship training system. The reality is that under the former Tory regime we basically gutted the apprenticeship system in this province. It used to be a decent apprenticeship system that was able to do some justice to training people in certified trades. I would hope that in this bill that the government says is going to assist people to get back to work and create employment—all this is is technical stuff about how you do the licensing, who looks over the licensing and what happens as far as standardization of some of the licensing in

Ontario. It doesn't deal with what is the bigger issue, in my view, which is apprenticeship training.

I want to say that my good friend Andrea Horwath did an excellent job in trying to cover what this bill is all about. So if members are that upset and feel one way or another on this bill, they should get up and debate it.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

The member for Hamilton East has two minutes to reply.

Ms Horwath: I really do want to thank the member opposite for his very passionate response. I think it's very important that the members who are sponsoring this bill actually get up and speak to it. I think it's really important to recognize that although he spoke particularly about one section, which had to do with electricians, in fact, as I raised several times in my discussion, there are—I could stand here and count them; I can't even see how many there are here—dozens upon dozens of acts that are being tinkered with in some way by this bill. It is an omnibus bill. Certainly you can take one little piece and say that this particular person has not provided enough substantial debate on the bill, but neither did the person who was criticizing that.

I know what I'm saying when I'm representing the people of Hamilton East. I understand what this kind of bill can do. I also understand what other kinds of initiatives the government can bring forward—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: I would ask the government members to allow the member for Hamilton East to make her response. I can barely hear her.

1950

Ms Horwath: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I also know what kinds of things the government can do to alleviate some of the financial pressure that is on people in Ontario. As Mr Bisson—I thank him for his comments—and Mr Kormos have indicated, there are certainly parts of this bill that can be supported. However, I think it's incumbent upon the opposition parties to clearly indicate what is lacking and what is missing. That is certainly something that I attempted to do, and I proudly do that on behalf of the people whom I represent in Hamilton East as well as the NDP caucus who, although it does have some agreement on many of the clauses, does have some concerns about what is very obviously missing.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Bisson: The first thing I want to say is, I appreciate having the opportunity tonight to stand up and to debate this particular bill. There are a couple of things that I want to put on the record. I want to say first out that there are a number of parts of this bill that quite frankly I'm supportive of. I mentioned earlier in my comments to Madame Horwath that, as an electrician, I understand some of the rationale around why we want to deal with some of the licensing system in the province of Ontario. We need to make sure there is a common standard. I don't think anybody, either in industry in the skilled

trades, or in the trade union movement, for that matter, have any difficulty with that particular part of the bill.

But I want to make very clear up front that there are a couple of things that we'd like to hear the government speaking to, if not in this legislation, then at least by ministerial announcement. And that's the whole issue of apprenticeship training. Apprenticeship training is one of the most effective ways of being able to give people an opportunity to work their way into a skilled trade that we have had, as experienced in the province over many years.

I'm a beneficiary of that. I worked at the Pamour Porcupine mine as an electrical apprentice, working under the tutelage of other electricians. I was registered as an apprentice, went off to trade school at both Algonquin College in Ottawa and here at George Brown in Toronto. As a result of the combination of working under the tutelage of journeymen electricians as well as some on-site training that I did with my employer and going off to trade school every year for two or three months, I began to basically work my way to being able to call myself a licensed electrician.

I just think it's a crying shame in this province that we are where we are today when it comes to the issue of apprenticeship training. The Tories, when they were in power, basically gutted the apprenticeship training system. I'm just saying to the government, we have opportunities in this Legislature to raise issues every now and then, and this particular bill, Bill 70, gives me the opportunity to do that.

I want to say why it's important. We all understand that there's been a humungous change, again, by the past Conservative government of our education system. And in that particular change we've really started to stream young people into the university sector. If we take a look at the elimination of grade 13, and we look at where a lot of guidance counsellors are within high school systems across Ontario, we see there's a very large onus on pushing people into the university stream.

Well, I just want to say that not every young person wants to go off to university, and rightfully so. There are various other things we can do by way of making a living that give people a very good income, give people a very challenging work life and many things, and those are the skilled trades. I would think one of the things that the government would want to have done when they introduced Bill 70 was to have had at one point or other a ministerial statement or a press conference, or maybe a response in these speeches, to talk about the government's intent to do something about reviving the apprenticeship training system here in the province of Ontario.

I say again that apprenticeship training is one of the ways that we are able to qualify people for very meaningful work in trades and actually give industry the skilled tradespeople they need in order to operate. There's a huge problem. In fact, this last weekend in the city of Timmins I had the opportunity to canvass with my federal colleague who's running for election in Timmins—James Bay, Charlie Angus. We went by a number of

machine shops and welding shops, I think it was on Friday, as we went around canvassing from one area to the other. Without our saying anything, on every stop we made in those shops, when we asked people, "What is the number one issue within the workplace?" they didn't say "money" for the most part, but I'm sure that was high on their list of priorities, because it's certainly high on everybody's priorities. One of the things they talked about was the need to develop a strong apprenticeship training system. They complained that they now have to pay a user fee when they go off and register themselves as apprentices. At one time, that was a service provided by the province of Ontario. Many employers are unwilling to pick up the cost of registering their apprentices.

When it comes to the issue of going off to trade school, in many cases the employer is unwilling to pay the registration of the apprentice within the community college system. When I went through the community college system to become an electrician, that registration was paid for by the province of Ontario. That was the provincial government's contribution toward developing the apprenticeship training system and allowing an apprentice like me to advance through the system. They complained about not having the ability to pay to go off to trade school.

There was one particular gentleman there who, as I talked to him, was really upset. He said that he was a third-year apprentice millwright and had yet to go off to his basic training program because he couldn't afford, with two young children at home, the dollars to be able to register himself inside the college system. The employer for whatever reason, rightly or wrongly—I would argue probably wrongly—was unwilling to pay. But I raise this issue: Should the employer have to pay? And I argue, no; that should be a responsibility of the province. The province, in my view, has a responsibility to provide a training infrastructure to the industry of Ontario. Without that, Ontario cannot position itself very well when it comes to being one of the most competitive economies in North America.

Why is training important? I tell people, take a look at what they call the Celtic Tiger. My good friend Tony Martin, who is running for election federally—

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: —I'm not going to go there yet—used to raise this issue. At one time, not that long ago—some 20, 25 years ago—Ireland was behind everybody else in Europe when it came to—

Mr Kormos: It was stagnating.

Mr Bisson: It was stagnating. Their economy was going nowhere. The Irish government decided they had to make some investments. One of the key investments the Irish government made was in training—college, university and apprenticeships.

Mr Kormos: What did they do with tuition?

Mr Bisson: They eliminated tuition altogether. They said to people, "If you want to go off to college, if you want to go off to university, if you want to register in an apprenticeship, there will be no cost to you as an

individual." Yes, that was a big-ticket item for the state, for Ireland itself. But at the end of the day the dividends paid back to that country big time because they had trained people within the economy, which allowed them to go out and lever the investment of people to establish themselves in Ireland.

All I'm saying is that Ontario can't sit on its laurels and say, "Oh, we're the great place to be. After all, we're Ontari-ari-ario and we don't have to do anything." I'm saying that the economy is going through a change, and if we as a province don't actively get involved in training at every level, and particularly in this case in the apprenticeship training system, I think it's going to be a great disservice.

Si on regarde dans les communautés comme Hearst, Kapuskasing et dans d'autres places, ce programme d'apprentissage a des retombées économiques très importantes pour ces communautés. On regarde, par exemple, comment Tembec à Kapuskasing, ou Tembec à Smooth Rock Falls, ou Columbia Forest Products à Hearst pourrait opérer leurs « plants » s'il n'y avait pas le monde dans ces usines qui ont l'entraînement nécessaire, les forces, les compétences nécessaires pour opérer ces moulins.

Écoute, ce sont des technologies qui sont très développées quand on regarde la technologie du milieu de travail d'aujourd'hui. J'ai fait un programme d'apprentissage en 1970. Moi, je travaillais des « light bulbs » et puis des affaires assez simples au début.

Interjection.

M. Bisson: C'est des « light bulbs ». On a ça en français. Mes amis francophones de l'autre coin comprennent quand je dis « light bulb ».

Le point que je fais c'est qu'entre 1970 et le début des années 1980, la technologie dans l'industrie n'était pas avancée telle qu'elle est là. Quand je rentre, par exemple, chez Tembec, un moulin de pâte à papier à Smooth Rock Falls, ou quand je rentre à une papeterie directement à Kapuskasing, je regarde la technologie dans ces machines et je te dis que c'est une technologie très avancée.

Les employeurs commencent maintenant à dire, « On a toute la garde dans le domaine du travail, le monde qui ont fait leur apprentissage entre 1970 et 1980 et qui sont pas mal proches de leur retraite. » Regardez-moi, par exemple. J'ai 47 ans. Si je travaillais encore dans l'industrie, j'aurais peut-être un autre 10, 15 ans au maximum, et on n'a rien fait pour avoir la relève.

2000

C'est ça le point. Si on ne fait pas les investissements nécessaires aujourd'hui pour s'assurer qu'il va y avoir une relève, l'industrie dans le nord, comme dans d'autres places à travers l'Ontario, va être mise dans une situation très précaire, parce qu'ils ne vont pas avoir le staff nécessaire dans leurs usines pour bien les maintenir et opérer. Ces jours-ci, ce n'est pas seulement une question d'avoir un travailleur avec son onzième ou douzième année à qui on dit, « Va opérer la machine. » Asteur, ce sont des technologies qu'on appelle « process controlled » qui sont très avancées d'une manière technique, et on a be-

soin d'avoir le staff dans ces usines pour être capable de vraiment opérer ces machines d'une manière efficace et de s'assurer qu'on peut faire la maintenance.

Le point sur lequel je veux finir est la question—

Interjection.

Mr. Bisson: Oh, merci beaucoup : « l'ampoule ». Mon ami M. Kormos est un bon ami. Quand j'ai dit le mot « light bulb », comme un bon ami du caucus NDP, il voulait que je me serve du bon mot francophone, et il l'a même bien épilé. Regardez, monsieur le Président, c'est « ampoule », avec un « e ». C'est-tu M. Kormos qui a écrit ça? Non, hein? C'est vous, madame? Vous êtes excellente.

Interjection.

Mr. Bisson: OK. Je me le demandais. Je pensais que vous vouliez dire quelque chose.

The Acting Speaker: I don't want you using props.

Mr. Bisson: Ça vient de la Greffière, monsieur le Président.

You actually wrote that? That's amazing; with an "e" at the end.

Mr Kormos: Do you think I can't write?

Mr Bisson: Well, I didn't think you could write in French. That's pretty good.

Mr Kormos: I'm working on the literacy.

Mr Bisson: You're very good.

Je veux finir sur ce point-là. Avec les apprentissages, si on ne fait pas les investissements nécessaires aujourd'hui, puis on ne réforme pas le système d'apprentissage pour faire entrer des nouveaux dans le système pour s'assurer qu'on peut faire l'entraînement nécessaire, on va se trouver dans une situation, dans 10 ou 15 ans—et ce n'est pas moi qui le dis; c'est l'industrie elle-même.

Quand on parle aux employeurs du nord-est de l'Ontario, dans les mines ou dans l'industrie forestière, ils disent tous la même affaire : qu'eux autres se trouvent de plus en plus coincés avec la compétition d'aujourd'hui, les prix, et ils n'ont pas nécessairement l'argent qu'ils voudraient avoir pour être capables d'investir eux-mêmes dans des programmes d'apprentissage.

C'est pour ça que je dis que, comme gouvernement provincial, on a une responsabilité de s'assurer que ce monde-là est dans le système pour remplacer ceux qui sont là présentement. C'est un point, je pense, qui est important à faire.

The other thing I noticed in this bill, and I was trying to find it just before I got up on my feet, was the whole issue having to do with the Cemeteries Act. I don't know how many times we've gotten into debates in this House over the Cemeteries Act, but this is one that I thought was rather interesting. I'm just going to read it as best I can here, with the glasses I don't have on that I left in my office, which I can't go and get because I'd lose the floor. I'm getting to the point, if you'll notice, where I have to throw this almost all the way down to Mr Kormos's seat so I can read it. I've got long arms.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): Do you want me to hold it for you?

Mr Bisson: Could you hold it over there, please? It says, "A confidentiality provision is added to the act. In addition, powers are added to make regulations that require the registrar to maintain a public record of certain documents and information and to publish certain documents and information and that authorize the registrar to conduct quality assurance programs and to use information collected under the act for the purpose of those programs."

Let me just put that in really simple English, because that was written in legalese. The problem is, and it's happened in my riding a couple of times, where cemeteries have records that, let's say, are not just exactly spot on. This is an amendment that I very much support, because at least twice now in 14 years I've had relatives come back looking for deceased family from years back who are unable to find them because the records of the cemetery indicate that the person has been buried in a certain place, but when they go to that place, somebody else's name is on the plot. The reason for that is that there has never really been—

Hon Mr Watson: It's your voters' list.

Mr Bisson: I'll tell you, that's probably a Liberal voters' list. You got that right. I always wondered why they used to win those advance polls. Now I know. The secret's out of the bag.

Anyway, it's a very traumatic experience for those families. I remember one particular family coming to my office and saying they had come back to find their grandfather. This particular man had met his grandfather only once in his life, when he was about 11 or 12 years old, on a trip back in to the Highway 11 corridor. His grandfather had died, and here he was some years later—I'd say this man was about 50 years old at the time—looking for where his grandfather was buried. He was trying to bring some of his adult children to visit—would you get Peter, please?

Mr Marchese: It's Peter you want?

Mr Bisson: Yes, if you can come over here, sir.

Mr Marchese: Peter, we need you to hold this up.

Mr Bisson: Can you come to your seat, please? I want you to come to your seat.

Mr Kormos: For Pete's sake, keep going.

Mr Bisson: You're welcome. Very good. I would just say, it's amazing. We have a small caucus, but they are so determined to do their duty.

Look at this, Mr Marchese and Madame Martel, who ran all the way here just to be with you tonight. Stay tuned, everybody. A little bit later it'll be Rosario, followed by Shelley, speaking out on behalf of the people.

But anyway, I want to make this point: The amendments to the Cemeteries Act, I support. Why? I wanted to finish that story. The man comes into my office and says, "I have to see Mr Bisson, absolutely." My staff, Diane up in Kapuskasing, says, "This man has to see you," and I say, "What for?" and she says, "He can't find his grandfather." I say, "How the heck am I going to find him?" and she says, "No, you don't understand. He's buried and

we should be able to find him, but he's not in the plot that was registered within the town."

So I go off with this particular person, after making some phone calls, and sure as heck, the grandfather was supposed to be buried—it's kind of funny, but it's not. He was supposed to be buried in a spot and, as I got to the spot, let's say it was a M. Charest that we were looking for, but there was a Mr Smith. So the family was upset because they were combing through the graveyard, trying to find where their grandfather was buried but, as we found out later through some investigation, there were problems when it came to the record-keeping, so in fact he had been buried in the right cemetery but they had marked the wrong plot. So I just think, on behalf of M. Charest who came to see me, we've got to give pause to this bill and that's why I ask, Mr Speaker, that we have adjournment of the debate.

The Acting Speaker: Mr Bisson has moved adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 2007 to 2037.

The Acting Speaker: Will all those in favour of the motion please rise and remain standing.

Will all those who are opposed to the motion please rise and remain standing.

Deputy Clerk (Ms Deborah Deller): The ayes are 5; the nays are 32.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

The member for Timmins-James Bay still has the floor.

Mr Bisson: I think it's rather interesting that we moved adjournment of the debate and the government voted to keep the debate going. I'm glad to see that. It indicates that the government is finally going to be speaking to the bill. For example, you can talk to the amendments to the Cemeteries Act, which I think are important, as well as maybe talking a little bit about the need to reform our apprenticeship training system. I look forward to Mr Patten, who is going to get up and speak about such things that are important in the bill because, obviously, the Liberals want to speak to this bill. I think it's fine. Like I said at the outset, there are a number of things in this bill that are supported.

But I just want to point out yet another section of this bill that I thought was rather interesting, and that was the section I read on the Consumer Reporting Act. Again, I've got to hold the bill far out because I forgot my glasses downstairs. It basically says, "The act is amended to clarify that a consumer reporting agency must not include in a consumer report information regarding a debt or collection." I always thought that was the case, and I was a little bit surprised to see that inside the bill. I always thought they were not allowed to report that kind of information, and I wasn't aware that it was an issue. I

would just like to know if any of the government members are able to respond to where that particular reform comes from because it was never my understanding that collection agencies did that in any way, shape or form. So I just was wondering when I saw that particular act.

Then there was another section that I read—I love the parts of the bills that give us the explanatory notes because it gives us—oh yes, this was the one. I thought this was rather interesting, the Paperback and Periodical Distributors Act. I'm sure that most members are riveted to that section of the bill, and I've read that section. But if you look in the middle, it says here, "In addition, powers are added to make regulations that require the registrar to maintain a public record of certain documents and information and to publish certain documents and information"—a lot of repetitive words there; I should ask that you cut that down a bit—"and that authorize the registrar to conduct quality assurance programs and to use information collected under the act for the purpose of those programs."

If I hold it back far enough, I'm able to read it. But I just thought that was interesting. What quality are we talking about? Certainly we're not talking about the quality of the novels because, I can tell you, there's a whole bunch of books we'd be able to take off the shelf. I've got to say to those who haven't had a chance to read it yet, *The Da Vinci Code*—has anybody got the book? A very good read. It's a good book. I recommend it very strongly. It's actually quite a good read.

When we talk about assurance programs, what exactly are we talking about here? Because as I read that, is it that they're not allowed to, as publishers, refer to who are the backers for the publishing of the book? I wasn't quite sure and I'd like somebody to clarify exactly what that's all about.

Then there's an amendment to the Corporations Act, but I can't find it and I'm running out of time quickly, so I'm not going to be able to report that.

The other one was the Theatres Act. I stood with the brothers and sisters that were on strike over a decertification move on the part of an employer a couple years ago. I'm sure that it has nothing to do with that, and I'd like to know that it doesn't. But it "adds a confidentiality provision to the act. It also adds powers to make the following regulations," and I don't have enough time to read them all, but one of the regulations deals with authorizing "the director to conduct quality assurance programs and to use information collected under the act for the purpose of those programs." It goes back to the other regulation that we talked about earlier.

Mr Speaker, I've run out of time.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Hon Mr Watson: I'm delighted to speak to this bill. I would remind the members of the New Democratic Party that a number of us on this side of the House in fact did speak to this bill last week. So the silence you hear from this side of the floor is a result of the strong support that the Liberal Party of Ontario has for the working men and

women of this province, because they very much support the amendments to the Electricity Act.

This is a bill that is going to help small businesses, travel agents or people travelling. It's going to improve the real estate industry and the whole issue that we heard some members talk about, which was payday loans. This bill, if passed, would require lenders to disclose the full cost of borrowing for consumer loans. This is going to help the people whom those individuals purport to help.

Perhaps it's my naiveté as a new member, but the amount of time that has been wasted by frivolous discussion over there—most of those members have not even read the bill. They have insulted this Legislature and the people of Ontario by wasting time. The once great NDP party, people like Stephen Lewis, Tommy Douglas and David Lewis, must be simply disgraced by the performance of these people who come to this chamber ill-prepared to debate the substantive issues that this government is putting forward.

I would encourage the honourable members, if they're serious about helping workers—what about the gentleman from the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers who wants this legislation passed to help the men and women of this province? It's going to make this province safer. Bring some substance to the debate—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr Kormos: I listened carefully to the comments of my colleague from Timmins-James Bay, and I tell you, five minutes of his comments are worth two hours of Liberal comments on this bill. The problem is there hasn't been two hours of Liberal participation in the debate. There hasn't been an hour and a half of Liberal participation in the debate. There hasn't been an hour and 10 minutes of Liberal participation in the debate. There has been exactly one hour of leadoff shared, as they would have it, by five people reading canned, fluff speeches. What a pathetic excuse for participation in a debate. What a pathetic excuse for a minister who would stand up and protest about oh so many of his colleagues participating in the debate when five of them took, what, 12 minutes apiece—on average, I suppose—to collaborate in the minister's leadoff.

Look, New Democrats make no apologies for standing up to a government that has lost all credibility. The evidence is in. The evidence is clear. The jury has come back. Clearly, the people of this province don't believe the Liberals for good reason: because the Liberals promise anything they have to to win favour and, in the case of September of last year, to win an election, and then proceed to break those promises as quickly as they share a one-hour leadoff in a debate around Bill 70.

People don't believe the Liberals. It's Dalton McGuinty's Liberals at Queen's Park that have privatized health care, that have privatized chiropractic, optometry care, that have privatized physiotherapy. Nobody believes this government. Nobody believes this minister. Nobody believes these Liberals.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Patten: It's about time. I spoke a little earlier—

Mr Kormos: It's about time Dick was in cabinet.

Mr Patten: Thank you. But I want to say to the member from Niagara Centre that I did not hear any substantive issue related to the bill. As we all know—and I understand this—in opposition, your job is to beat up the government, to try to make them look bad, but I don't think this evening the opposition is doing very well.

It's so good to see my good NDP friends who are all here at the moment, and of course I can't mention that others are not, so I will not say anything. But I do want the people who may be watching, those hundreds of thousands of people tonight who are watching, to know that this particular bill is something that helps workers in a variety of industries.

The head of the electrical union, as you would know, is very supportive of this. There are many people who have been taken advantage of by the travel industry who now will now be protected. There's consumer protection. People who have to do these things—the whole arrangement of things with the federal government and the provincial government in terms of the identification of films and one thing or another. We have a bill here that everybody, quite frankly, all parties, essentially agree with. However, tonight we listen to the rhetoric and diatribes of the NDP, who attempt to discredit something that, in the end, I believe they will be extremely supportive of.

The Acting Speaker: We have time for one last question or comment.

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I wouldn't want to miss it, would I?

I listened to the member. I heard him talk about the Cemeteries Act and the problem that he had had with a constituent of his whose body was put in the wrong plot.

Mr Kormos: By the Liberals.

Ms Martel: Any of you who were here heard him say that. I don't know if the Liberals did that or not, but it certainly did happen.

I was here and listened to him talk about the apprenticeship program and how the changes that are in the bill, frankly, tinker around the edges when what is really needed is an overhaul of the apprenticeship system, what is really needed is for this government to cancel some of the fees that were brought in by the Conservatives with respect to apprentices. Is that in the bill this evening, something that would really help young people interested in trades? No, of course not. We don't need some tinkering around the edges. If you want to help apprentices—I heard Mr Patten say we're going to help workers in these industries—why don't you cancel the fee increases brought in by the Conservatives? Do that tonight and you'd get this bill tonight.

2050

I heard my colleague as well talk about other issues in this ministry that we should be dealing with. I'm surprised the minister got up and spoke a little bit about how concerned he was about what we had to say. He should be more worried about what's going on in his office with respect to birth certificates. I can tell you that, after the

Family Responsibility Office, the agency we have the most trouble with right now is that minister's agency with respect to birth certificates. So eight or nine months later, despite everything he has to say and despite his little MPP reports and releases, the second-biggest problem we have in our office continues to be getting birth certificates in a timely manner. Maybe the minister can put his attention to that very serious issue and help constituents in my riding.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Timmins-James Bay has two minutes to reply.

Mr Bisson: I'm hurt. The government has stabbed me in the heart. They said I talked about garbage, and all I was doing was reading their bill. I just say to the government, if you have a problem with garbage, why are you printing it?

I stood here and talked about how we needed to amend the Cemeteries Act, as in the case I raised earlier. I talked about the changes we're making to the Electrical Act that deal with the licensing of electricians. I talked about the changes we're making to the Consumer Reporting Act, and the government says I talked about garbage. I suggest they read their own bill and then maybe they wouldn't be calling it garbage. I've just got to say that off the top.

I also have to say it'll be interesting to see if the government is actually going to get up and participate in this debate, considering that I heard the Minister of Labour say how important the bill was and they had a whole fulsome debate on the part of the government side.

My good friend from Niagara Centre pointed out that we've had but five Liberals speak on the bill within a one-hour lead. I've just got to repeat the heckle I heard from my leader, Mr Hampton from the New Democratic Party, which I thought was good, and that is, "It takes 12 minutes to break a promise in the Liberal caucus." I don't know. I think that's pretty well what it is.

I've just got to say, listen, guys—

Mr Kormos: Laugh, David, laugh.

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): Too tired.

Mr Bisson: I can't believe the whip is tired. Whips are never tired. You know that.

I support a number of things in this bill. There are a few things that I have a problem with. There are some amendments to the Corporations Act that I didn't get a chance to talk about, which were a bit of a problem. There was also one to the statute law amendment act that I read that I thought was a bit problematic, but I'm sure the government's going to refer this bill to committee so we can deal with the particular amendments that will probably be needed to fix this bill because any time we see an inconsequential bill so large, it always—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you very much. Further debate?

Mr Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): I'll be sharing my time with the member for Etobicoke North.

I have to wonder whether in fact there's anybody left watching television tonight. We've been here since a quarter to seven listening to the debate in probably the

lowest moment we've seen since we've been here since last fall. Members were getting up and speaking to a bill that you could tell the majority of them probably had never even looked at, mentioning hardly anything to do with the bill throughout the entire evening and criticizing us for wanting to listen. We were listening very closely to them because we're waiting to see if they knew what they were talking about. It was very obvious to me, following the debate, that they hadn't read the bill at all.

I'd like to talk about the bill because we're here to talk about the Ministry of Consumer Business and Services Statute Law Amendment Act. Bill 70 paves the way to provide consumer protection and public safety legislation that is fair in response to the needs of Ontarians.

I'd hate to think that the leader of the third party, after all this time this evening—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order. I apologize to the member for Scarborough Centre.

Mr Duguid: No problem, Mr Speaker. Thank you very much.

I know we're not to speak about the lack of presence of any members here in this House, so I won't specifically. But it's funny how the New Democrats would be here when they're talking about drivels, but when we actually get up to talk about the bill, they don't want to hear about it. Half of them get up and leave because they don't want to hear about what we're doing to help consumers across this province. Frankly, they should be very embarrassed by that.

Let's talk a little about the bill, because we haven't talked about the bill all evening long. It's important that the people of this province know some of the good things happening here with this bill.

The draft regulations for the Travel Industry Act, 2002, were released for comments in March and the discussion period ended April 30. I'm sure there has been much input on this. There's a concern. They want to make sure the changes are fair to everybody: consumers and the travel industry. We know the travel industry has suffered a great deal over the last number of years, with 9/11 and SARS. The travel industry in Toronto and across Ontario, in fact in all of Canada, has suffered a great deal because of all this, so it is important that we look at the impact of our consumer protection legislation on that industry.

At the same time, consumers need better protections. For example, I'm delighted to support the proposed cooling-off period of 10 days for consumers who buy time-share units or join vacation clubs that would allow the ability to get out of those deals. Let me tell you why.

It wasn't long ago that a constituent visited my constituency office. His name was Mr Prasad, if I remember. Mr Prasad told me that a couple of years ago he signed an agreement for a time-share contract. Later that evening he realized that the information he was given was false, so he wanted to get out of the agreement. He waited until the next day and called the company thinking that, in good faith, they would let him out of the agreement. Lo and behold, he was given the runaround.

He called them and they didn't return his calls. He kept calling over and over again. Eventually, he went and found them somewhere and was able to talk to them, and they just continued to give him the runaround. He was not out thousands of dollars, he was out tens of thousands of dollars because of this. My advice to him was, "Hire a lawyer." I'm not a lawyer myself. I can't give legal advice. But he was given false information, in his view. He showed me the information he was given. I'm just a layman, not a lawyer. I can't say for sure whether he had a bona fide case that he could win. But it's a shame that this gentleman, who I don't think could afford to go out and get a lawyer, would have to go through that. When this legislation goes through and these regulations come forward, it's going to make things a lot easier for consumers when they do get into those high-pressure time-share situations.

We around here don't get a chance to go on vacation very often these days, but when we do, we all know those time-share pressures when you're down at a resort somewhere, where they try to hook you in for some free drinks or a free dinner. You sit there for half an hour or an hour and they apply these hard-sell tactics.

Hon Mr Watson: That's where Chris Stockwell is.

Mr Duguid: That may well be. That could be where Chris Stockwell is right now.

This doesn't mean that all time-shares are rip-offs. Some of them are good. I know some members here take advantage of them, because I've talked to them about them. But there are some that do take advantage of our constituents and consumers. That's one of the reasons it's important we get this legislation through.

Another area is the negative-option marketing. This is a key provision. I was going to talk about Rogers. I remember consumers right across this province being totally upset because they were given services and, if I remember, they had to get back to Rogers and tell them they didn't want them, otherwise they were stuck with those services and charged. Consumers across this province rose up against John Tory and Rogers. John Tory's an OK guy. I've met him. I know him well. But I'll tell you, I hope he doesn't bring that kind of leadership to this province if he gets the opportunity to lead the Tories, to try to hoodwink consumers into agreeing to take on these services. This kind of legislation will not allow people like John Tory or companies like Rogers to do these kinds of things. Thank goodness Rogers saw the light. I appreciate the fact that they did, and I think consumers do too.

2100

But this legislation, as it and the regulations go through, will ensure that won't happen again. I've experienced it myself with CD packages. I remember the first time I went out and bought a CD player. I'm always behind the times with those kinds of things, but it was probably 10 or 15 years ago now, quite a while after they'd come out. We wanted to buy some CDs, so we got involved in one of these packages. They just send you CDs whether you want them or not. We were trying to

stop it, but we couldn't. The CDs kept coming. We were lucky. In the end, I opened the CDs and some of them were pretty good, so I didn't mind that much. But frankly, as a consumer, I thought that was totally inappropriate.

I also like the fact, when you look at some of the things this ministry is involved in—they talk about tips for fraud for consumers. That's a very important area that we need to do more in, particularly when you look at seniors' fraud. With seniors, you get the door-to-door salesmen going around to sell them alarm systems or renovations on their house.

Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough): Hucksters.

Mr Duguid: We've all, as politicians—I was a local politician for nine years prior to this. I'd have seniors coming into my office in tears, as they'd lose thousands of dollars through these things. The member from Peterborough indicated they were hucksters, and I agree with that. Some of these guys at the door are hucksters, when it comes to that.

Interjection.

Mr Duguid: No, I'm not talking about the Tories. I'm talking about the door-to-door salesmen that sometimes come and try to sell these alarm systems to people, the door-to-door, snake-oil-type salesmen. The fact is that we do need to help our seniors with tips to help them avoid that or the phone calls they get, the telemarketing, where they can get hooked into investments.

These types of initiatives hook in with all the great things we're doing for seniors. We talked about them in the recent budget, about getting 2,300 new joint replacement surgeries. We know some seniors are on waiting lists for 61 weeks for a hip or knee replacement.

This government is here to help seniors: a \$448-million increase for home care, and 95,700 seniors are going to get home care as a result of this.

This government is here for seniors: nine new MRIs and CT sites. Many seniors will be able to take advantage of that.

The \$125 property tax supplement for seniors: That's going to help a number of low-income seniors in our community.

OHIP coverage for eye exams will cover seniors over 65 years old. That's going to help them.

There will be 2,000 new front-line staff in nursing homes to provide better care for our seniors.

This government cares very much for seniors. This bill and the initiatives that this minister is taking to protect seniors from consumer fraud are all part of our big package to treat the seniors in this province better than they've ever been treated in the past.

Thank you for the time. I'll now pass it over to the member for Etobicoke North.

The Acting Speaker: Does the member from Etobicoke North wish to participate?

Mr Shafiq Qaadri (Etobicoke North): No, Speaker. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: OK. Questions and comments?

Mr Kormos: Once again the Liberals make promises they don't keep, make promises they break. He promised that the member for Etobicoke North was going to be sharing his time: another broken promise. You make promises you have no intention of keeping. What is with these Liberals? It is chronic. It has overwhelmed them. It's like there's some kind of broken-promise fluid coursing through their veins instead of blood. Transfusions might be in order. You reek of broken promises.

How can you tell when a Liberal is misstating the facts? His lips are moving. It's an old joke, but, heck, it comes to mind. And you know the straight line isn't, "How can you tell when a Liberal is misstating the facts?" but far be it from me to be unparliamentary.

What have the Liberals done for the people of Ontario? The Liberals have demonstrated that you can't count on Liberals to keep their promises. The Liberals have demonstrated that Liberals will say and do anything they have to to get elected and then ignore every promise they made—no, not ignore: break every promise they made. The Liberals have demonstrated that they will hold themselves out to be the saviours of health care but then be the first government in this province to privatize public health care, like the Liberals have privatized chiropractic, optometric services and physiotherapy. They've introduced American-style health care to Ontario, where whether or not you get optometry services depends upon how much money you've got in the bank, depends upon your ability to pay, and whether or not you get physiotherapy depends upon how much money you've got in the bank, depends upon your ability to pay. The Liberals say, "It's the wealthy who have access to health care, not regular working Canadians."

Hon Mr Watson: I want to thank the member from Scarborough, Brad Duguid, one of the greatest members of provincial Parliament—very eloquent.

It's really quite amazing that the New Democratic Party is against improving protection for consumers in leasing agreements. Why are the NDP against strengthening refund rights for improper billings or against clarifying cancellation rights for Internet purchases and mail orders? Why is the New Democratic Party wasting this House's time and dragging their feet on making sure that consumer protection legislation for the 21st century is introduced?

This bill, if proclaimed, is going to lengthen and create new cooling-off periods, allow for heavier penalties for dishonest activity, make full cost disclosure for leases mandatory, and outlaw, as Mr Duguid pointed out, negative-option billing.

Some of the members touched on the payday loan issue. This legislation that this government has brought forward, if passed, would require lenders, for the first time in Ontario history, to disclose the full cost of borrowing for consumer loans. What did the NDP and the member from Niagara Centre do when he was minister for, what, a few weeks? He did nothing on this file. He was also the minister responsible for financial institutions—absolutely nothing. This legislation will give

transparency and full disclosure for those companies who are charging what some would consider exorbitant interest rates.

I urge the NDP, first and foremost, read the bill. Take the time. You're all getting extra money now. You've all got a pay raise. Read the bill. Put some substance into these debates. Put in a little quality instead of quantity so the people of Ontario get their money's worth. After listening to you, they're going to be coming to me asking for a refund.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I was attracted to come in and comment tonight because Bill 70 is what I'd refer to as the consumer and business services omnibus bill. There are actually 22 acts being amended and made more complicated, because a lot of what I read here—if you look through the short titles, you will see the Athletics Control Act. This is stopping activities that people choose to do to keep fit, as I understand it. But the one I am more interested in is section 12, the Electricity Act.

I was in the estimates committee today until just recently. I was surprised. I asked a question in the House today of the Minister of Energy, and the question was very simple and quite direct. I asked him if the artificial number in the budget, the \$3.9 billion, was eventually going to be paid through the rates. The minister didn't tell me the answer, but I asked the Minister of Finance, Greg Sorbara, today in estimates. I'd encourage the people of Ontario to read the estimates committee today, June 22.

Mr Kormos: Give them your address and you can mail it to them.

Mr O'Toole: No, you can e-mail me and I will get it for you.

Greg Sorbara at least told the truth. He said that \$3.9 billion is going to show up in your rates at your home, wherever you live. If I read section 12 here, this is breaking one promise twice, so they're now on the second round of broken promises.

That's why this bill is in some controversy here tonight. I admire the NDP for standing and forcing some discussion and extended debate, because it's an omnibus bill and I suspect there are things in here the people of Ontario aren't certain about.

2110

Ms Martel: The Liberals are a little cross tonight because they thought they were going to get this bill tonight, and they're not going to. The minister in particular is pretty cranky and has a lot to say about how awful it is that we get up and speak, which is of course our duty, responsibility and privilege to do. He'll maybe be around for a little bit and will understand that pretty soon. There's no point getting cranky when we exercise our right to speak. We're going to do that, and if he doesn't like it, that's just too bad for him. Maybe he can spend some time dealing with the really serious issue in his ministry, the issue of trying to get birth certificates out of the registrar general's office. That continues to be the issue with the second-biggest volume in my office right now, and it has been for months. Maybe instead of

getting exercised here tonight because we use our privilege to speak as members, he can put his mind and his resources and all of whatever else he wants to do into dealing with this serious issue.

With respect to what the member from Scarborough Centre had to say—I think he talked about how the government was going to do something about health care. Let me just focus on that. What did Mr McGuinty have to say about premiums or health taxes? Here's what he had to say:

“Ontario Liberals oppose the return of OHIP premiums because they are a tax hike on working families,” says leader Dalton McGuinty.” And he is absolutely right about that, isn't he, Speaker?

“Two years ago, McGuinty castigated former Conservative leadership hopeful Chris Stockwell for proposing OHIP premiums.

“Families are already paying for health care with their taxes. Pay more for health care, pay twice for health care, but get less health care”—just like under these Liberals—“that's the Tory plan. It's certainly not the Liberal plan.”

Well, it certainly has become the Liberal plan, with the tax and the delisting of chiropractic, physiotherapy and optometric services.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Scarborough Centre has two minutes to reply.

Mr Duguid: I'd like to go back to the bill, which really has not been debated much by anybody who has talked throughout this debate except the Liberals.

One aspect of this bill is that passage of these proposed amendments as soon as possible will ensure that no longer would liability be imposed on travel agents in the event of airline failure. This is within our jurisdiction, but we have to turn to the feds and work with them on consumer protection in a lot of different cases. In this case we have to turn to the feds to talk about regulatory responsibility for airlines. I want to tell you that right now there is no better relationship in this country between a province and a federal government than the relationship that exists between the Liberal government here in Queen's Park and the Liberal government in Ottawa, and we will be able to get that done by working with the Martin government.

It's the same with health care, where we know that the Martin government will deliver in the area of health care and assist this province to deal with the mess we inherited from the Tories, ensuring that we are able to get those wait times shortened for procedures, ensuring that we can get the health care system cleaned up.

Similarly, we have to work that relationship with Ottawa with regard to an immigration agreement—which the previous government had not done anything about for eight years—which is going to help this province immensely in getting funding from the federal government in terms of immigrant settlement agreements, a window that is open now that we must really try to keep open.

Unprecedented investment in public transit in the cities in this province is coming about because of the

great relationship between the Liberal government at Queen's Park and the Liberal government in Ottawa.

All I can say is, let's hope that window stays open. We have an election coming up, and the people of this province will have a very important choice to make to ensure that window stays open.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Marchese: First of all, before I get into the bill, in and out of the bill as often as I can, I want to say hello to Fiore, who is watching these debates. Fiore, it's 9:15 on Tuesday night. I know you enjoy watching this parliamentary channel because you like to listen to everyone speak. I want to say hello to you. Secondly, I wanted to tell you, Fiore, that normally I wear a tie and jacket, a suit, but I was called here—because I'm not on duty tonight. I was not supposed to be on duty tonight. I'll explain why normally I shouldn't be here. We were expecting Liberals and Conservatives to debate the bill, but they weren't debating the bill at all. So I was called to take part in this discussion, because Liberals refuse to talk about their own bill.

You've got Brad, the member from Scarborough Centre, standing up and saying, “Discuss substance.” You've got the minister standing up and saying, “Discuss the substance of the bill. Why don't you people talk about the bill?” I say to the minister, it's not my job to talk about your bill. It's your job. You are the government in this place.

Brad, if you are so proud of your own bill, you should have taken the 20 minutes to talk about all the great things that are in it. Look. There's the Bailiffs Act, evidently—look at that. There's the Athletics Control Act, the Business Corporations Act, the Business Names Act, the Cemeteries Act (Revised), the Collection Agencies Act, the Consumer Protection Act. There is so much to talk about. What puzzles me is that the Liberals wouldn't stand up to speak about each and every one of those items.

Now, good watchers of this program, you've got to understand, there's got to be a problem when the Liberal Party presents a bill and they refuse to speak to their own bill. They attack the opposition for not speaking substantively or with substance about their bill. It is not my problem or job to present the issues for you. You're the ones who are elected. You get the big jobs. The Minister of Consumer and Business Services has got a good car, right? Someone drives him around. He gets the big pay. It's his role and his parliamentary assistant's and all the others, who also get paid a stipend for being parliamentary assistants to other ministers, to be here and debate the greatness of the act.

They took one hour, each taking 10 minutes. Brad, the member from Scarborough Centre, took 10. Nobody else was willing to share the bill. He raised one or two minor issues and then said, “I speak substantially to the bill.”

Interjection: He did.

Mr Marchese: He did. You've got the seals talking.

I say to you, this is your training ground. Why would you miss an opportunity to speak? Why would you do

that? You should all stand up and practise. God knows, a lot of you need to do that. Some of us over here get a lot of practice. I've got to say to the rump to my left—God bless, they're now to the left of us—that they need a lot of practice in speaking up to defend the government. So I urge each and every one of those members here and each and every one of those members there—there are lots of you—to stand up and defend yourselves. Talk about how great this bill is. Why would you wait for a New Democrat to do it for you?

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): He's watching. He's waiting.

Mr Marchese: Who's waiting? Are you waiting for Godot? Are you all waiting for Godot? I've got to tell you, Godot is not coming. He never did in the play, and he's not about to come here.

I want to say to you, this is the place where you train for debating, for speaking, to practise your style, your ideas, and do it as often as you can without notes. I think that would help you a lot.

Mr McMeekin: Tell your friend what's in the bill.

Mr Marchese: There's someone going crazy over there. My friend Ted from Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot, are you OK? I thought maybe there was something wrong with you.

The member, my buddy here from Niagara Centre, said something interesting earlier on. He asked, who is protecting the consumers from the Liberal government? Who's doing that except New Democrats? If New Democrats don't hold this government accountable—there's no Tory doing it. John was here, but they've all left.

Ms Martel: The Speaker's here.

Mr Marchese: Except the Speaker. You're quite right.

2120

The Acting Speaker: I would ask the member from Trinity-Spadina not to make reference to the absence of members.

Mr Marchese: Thank you, Speaker, for helping me out.

Interjections.

Mr Marchese: Fiore, do you hear them, the chatter? They can't stand up to speak, but they have a lot to say behind the scenes.

Hon Mr Watson: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I was wondering if the honourable member would give up his time for one of my colleagues to speak. Do we have his consent for a Liberal member to speak at this time?

The Acting Speaker: That's not a point of order, but thank you very much.

Mr Marchese: The minister asks if I would sit so one of them could stand. Why would I do that? You had the whole evening to stand up and speak to the bill because it's such a great bill and consumers just can't wait, and not one of you—except that Brad stood up for 10 minutes to talk about the substance of the bill. He split his time with someone who wouldn't speak for the other 10 minutes, the other half of the time.

Fiore, I hope you're enjoying this.

The member from Niagara Centre asked this: Who is protecting—

Ms Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'm going to practise here as a member of the rump. My friend opposite has suggested that we practise. I'm going to practise making a point of order on standing order 22(b). It seems to me that the member is not speaking to the bill.

The Acting Speaker: He's not directing his comments to the Chair either, and I would ask the member to do both.

Mr Marchese: I am waiting for the member from Don Valley not just to stand up on a point of order, as she did, which is her right, of course. But why wouldn't she stand up to speak for 20 minutes on the substance of the Athletics Control Act, the Bailiffs Act—what else do we have here? Good heavens, there's so much—Loi sur les sociétés par actions, Loi sur les noms commerciaux, Loi sur les cimetières (révisée), Loi sur les agences de recouvrement? Why doesn't she do that? There's so much in this bill to talk about. I don't want to have to do that for them. It's not my job, I'm telling you. It's your job. Member from Don Valley, you're the one who's got to tell the consumers why it is that you can break promises day in and day out. You're the one who has to tell the consumers how it is that before October 2, before you got elected, you made so many promises, and after October 2 why you couldn't wait a day to start breaking them. Who is protecting the consumers from you?

Oh, Brad, yes, I know you've got good relations with Paul Martin, the Prime Minister for a little while—great relations you've got. You guys are working so close, so tight you are. I understand that. I hope it lasts.

And what's your relationship with the consumers, the ones with whom have you broken the promise, the ones where you said here, your leader said, “Ontario Liberals oppose the return of OHIP premiums because they are a tax hike on working families,” says leader Dalton McGuinty? How does a consumer trust you? How does a consumer trust your leader when he says that and then immediately reverses himself? How can Liberals do that? How do you sleep at night and how do you put your right arm on your heart? How do you do that? I don't know.

I want to touch on a bit about the bill if I can. There's a proposed amendment that would free faultless, independent travel agents from liability in the event of an airline bankruptcy. While this change—

Mr Kormos: Who's protecting the consumer?

Mr Marchese: Who's protecting the consumers? That's the point. We know it protects the travel agents, and that's fair, because they are victims in certain circumstances. But who is protecting the consumer?

Mr Kormos: Not Jim. No, siree.

Mr Marchese: Jim?

Hon Mr Watson: Yes, it does.

Mr Marchese: The bill protects him? The bill does not protect the consumer. The bill protects the agent—fair.

Hon Mr Watson: And the consumer.

Mr Marchese: How does it protect the consumer? It doesn't protect the consumer, and I haven't heard the minister or a member of the rump or the other side of this place say to me how the consumer is protected, not one word about it.

Mr Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): Mr Speaker, on a point of order: I hate to interfere because the speech from the member for Trinity-Spadina is quite compelling. According to Hansard, and I have a copy of it here, on Tuesday, June 15, second reading of this bill did take place. Mr Watson spoke to the bill, Mr Delaney spoke to the bill, Mr Racco spoke to the bill—

The Acting Speaker: Can I ask how this is a point of order? I don't see it as being a point of order.

Mr Berardinetti: They're giving misinformation—

The Acting Speaker: It's not a point of order.

Mr Kormos: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker: The same point of order, or a different one?

Mr Kormos: No, of course not. I ask the Speaker to please express some concern about fraudulent points of order, like the fraudulent point of order just raised by the member over there.

The Acting Speaker: That was not a point of order either, and I recognize the member for Trinity-Spadina.

Mr Marchese: I understand the member from Scarborough Southwest is nervous or unhappy with something. I don't know what that is. I already pointed out that the minister spoke for a couple of minutes, a few other members spoke for a few more minutes, and that's the extent of the debate. But I already pointed that out; you didn't need a point of order to point out what I pointed out. What I want you to do is to stand up here and you, Lorenzo, defend your bill. Stand up and use the fullness of the time you have here.

Interjections.

Mr Marchese: The rump is saying, "We did." You didn't.

Mr Kormos: They get paid for just sitting.

Mr Marchese: That's true, Peter. How do you pay somebody just to sit here and not debate? Why would you be paying a member to defend your interests when they won't even debate their own bills? We're not paid poorly. I want you to stand up and defend yourselves and your bill. I pointed out that, yes, travel agents are protected in the event of an airline bankruptcy, and I say the

consumers are not protected. There is nothing here by way of general protection of airline ticket buyers that I am aware of.

Hon Mr Watson: Read the bill.

Mr Marchese: The minister says I should read the bill. I want the consumers watching this program to know what's in the bill, and I want you to stand up and defend that.

Hon Mr Watson: We did, on June 15.

Mr Marchese: He's saying to me, "Read the bill." Are you going to read the bill? I don't suspect you will. I suspect most of these members haven't read the bill either, and that's in part why they're not speaking to the bill.

Some members have prepared speeches, but I think some of them only have enough prepared speeches for a couple of minutes. When they run out of time because the prepared speeches aren't long enough to allow them to speak longer than 10 minutes, they won't speak. That's my reading of the situation. I could be wrong, but that's the way I see it.

Normally, when they have 20 minutes of a written speech, they read it out and they last 20 minutes. If they don't have any written speeches by the ministry staff, nobody speaks around here. I think it's wrong.

Ms Wynne: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: At the risk of being repetitive, standing order 23(b) demands that the member speak to the bill, and that is not what's happening.

The Acting Speaker: Well, we've got one minute to go. The member has been making reference to other speeches that have transpired during the course of this debate. I'll again recognize the member for Trinity-Spadina.

Mr Marchese: I know the member from Don Valley West is frustrated. I can see. I think there's an incredible urge for her to speak to the bill, and we look forward to her doing that—Speaker, are you doing something?

Mr Kormos: He's at the edge of his seat. He's excited.

Mr Marchese: At any moment, tell me when I should sit down if you're ready to—

The Acting Speaker: It being 9:30 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 pm.

The House adjourned at 2130.

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CONTENTS

Tuesday 22 June 2004

SECOND READINGS

**Ministry of Consumer and Business
Services Statute Law Amendment**

Act, 2004, Bill 70, *Mr Watson*

Mr Kormos...3151, 3155, 3158, 3164
3167

Ms Horwath.....3155, 3156, 3160

Mr Patten..... 3159, 3164

Mr Bisson.....3159, 3160, 3165

Mr Watson..... 3163, 3167

Ms Martel 3164, 3167

Mr Duguid..... 3165, 3168

Mr O'Toole 3167

Mr Marchese 3168

Debate deemed adjourned 3170

TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Tuesday 22 June 2004

**Loi de 2004 modifiant des lois
en ce qui concerne le ministère
des Services aux consommateurs
et aux entreprises, projet de loi 70,
*M. Watson***

M. Bisson3159, 3160, 3165

Débat présumé ajourné..... 3170



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Mercredi 23 juin 2004

Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 23 June 2004

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 23 juin 2004

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ONTARIO PROVINCIAL POLICE AUXILIARY

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): Last Friday, June 18, I had the privilege of attending the graduation of the 2004-01 class of the Ontario Provincial Police Auxiliary, held at the Ontario Education Leadership Centre just east of Orillia.

The Ontario Provincial Police Auxiliary program is the top auxiliary program in our country. There are now over 938 auxiliary officers representing 47 detachments across our province. Collectively they contribute over 250,000 hours of volunteer time to their local OPP detachments each and every year.

To show their appreciation of the OPP auxiliary program, a number of high-ranking officials in the OPP attended the event that saw 68 men and women graduate. In particular, Commissioner Gwen Boniface and keynote speaker Deputy Commissioner William Currie attended the graduation.

What is extremely important in recognizing the OPP Auxiliary is the close working relationship of the OPPA and the OPP. They are indeed all part of a larger OPP community. The auxiliary officers assist officers of the OPP detachments at numerous events and patrols through the year. Auxiliary officers come from a wide variety of backgrounds to act as volunteers, assisting police across our province.

I would like to thank Chief Superintendent Terry Harkins for his 36 years of dedication and leadership to the auxiliary program. The auxiliary program continues to be the dominant volunteer police program in our country, and much of its success over the past 45 years comes from the leadership of Terry and his predecessors. I appreciate this opportunity.

HMCS HAIDA

Ms Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): I rise today to share with all Ontarians an exciting event that's occurring on Friday, June 25, in the city of Hamilton: the

opening of the HMCS Haida National Historic Site and historic naval ship to the public.

You need only visit her Web site to discover that the Haida is the last remaining example of the 27 Tribal class destroyers built for the Royal Canadian Navy, the Royal Navy and the Royal Australian Navy between 1937 and 1945. The Tribals were oft described as "magnificent in appearance, majestic in movement and menacing in disposition." Technologically, they represented the most advanced naval architecture, marine propulsion systems and weaponry of their time.

Today the Haida is an irreplaceable historic artefact. Her significance has been formally recognized by the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada.

She's a cultural asset representing a lifestyle, however transient, of more than a generation of Canadians who served in Canada's navy between 1943 and 1963. The thousands of men who sailed on the Haida represented a total cross-section of Canadian society during that period. She is berthed at the HMCS Star Naval Reserve Unit at pier 9, at the foot of Catherine Street in the waterfront area of Hamilton. I invite people from across the province to visit the great city of Hamilton and to tour this magnificent ship.

ERIK SILK

Mr Vic Dhillon (Brampton West-Mississauga): I rise in the House today to mark the passing of a man who committed his life, talents and expertise to the betterment of Ontario, Ontario Provincial Police Commissioner Emeritus Erik H. Silk.

Commissioner Silk died on June 8 at the age of 96. Aside from his wife, the late Barbara Silk, and his three children, Robert, Michael and Barbara, you could say that Ontario was his greatest love. He began his long and proud career in the Ontario public service in 1934 and ended it with his retirement in 1973.

He held many posts during those 39 years, including legislative counsel and assistant Deputy Attorney General, but it was his work as the sixth commissioner of the Ontario Provincial Police that is probably his greatest accomplishment. Commissioner Silk was the first, and so far the only, civilian to head the OPP. He reorganized the OPP to increase accountability and recognition for all OPP personnel. He improved training, introduced a cadet program and strove to hire more bilingual recruits. His contributions were so great that he was honoured with the

commissioner emeritus title and the general headquarters library is named after him.

A memorial service will be held at Trinity Anglican Church in Streetsville tomorrow at 2 o'clock. I urge all those who can to attend and honour Erik Silk, a man who did so much in his life to honour Ontario.

CONTROL OF SMOKING

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): I believe everyone in this House would agree that given the importance of a strong economy, it's essential that proper research be conducted to ensure that policies will not negatively impact small business as well as the jobs, the livelihood, that go with that.

However, I find it unfortunate that this current Liberal government continues to deny the tourism and hospitality industry the right to be heard on the issue of designated smoking rooms and ventilation. An independent study recently released for the Fair Air Association of Canada clearly found that the majority of people in Ontario favour ventilation solutions such as designated smoking rooms rather than an outright ban on smoking in bars and pubs. Further, the survey found that a smoking ban will not stop people from lighting up; they'll either stay home or they'll go somewhere else.

What's wrong with ventilation? It seems to be the answer in office buildings with respect to the sick building syndrome, with respect to airborne illnesses, issues like the flu, colds, mould and allergies. There are other solutions, but this government chooses to listen only to the antis. It has turned its back on the tourism and hospitality industry. I wonder if the antis, the non-smokers, will frequent restaurants and bars to help the hospitality industry recover from lost revenue. Somehow I doubt that.

STELCO

Ms Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek): We are just about to take a break in a day or two for the summer, and I thought it was important that the voices of some of my constituents are heard today and that those voices continue to be heard over the summer months.

Many of my constituents are employees, retired employees or recently laid-off employees of Stelco. The level of uncertainty surrounding the future of Stelco is creating a great deal of anxiety for my constituents, their families and those who rely on Stelco as an economic anchor in our community.

Stelco is currently under court protection under the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act. I was quite happy that our Premier took swift action to appoint James Arnett to closely monitor the situation, and I do know that our government is very concerned about Stelco's economic viability and the impact on the Ontario economy as a whole.

My biggest concern, as the member for Stoney Creek, is for the people: the people who work for and with

Stelco, Stelco pensioners, both unionized and salaried, those who were recently given layoff notices, and the impact that the present uncertainty is having on their personal lives and the lives of their families.

The McGuinty government has brought together all the parties. The labour minister filed a motion to have a conciliator appointed, the Honourable George Adams. I understand there have been some meaningful and fruitful discussions among all parties at this point. It is my hope that those discussions will continue over the summer months and that we will have good news come the fall.

1340

FEDERAL ELECTION

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leeds-Grenville): On Monday, June 28, Ontario citizens have an important decision to make: choosing a new federal government. Regardless of what the Liberals would like to you believe, the main issue is trust.

The federal Liberals have won the last three elections on the basis of critical promises they've failed to keep: stopping free trade, cancelling the GST, implementing national day care and pharmacare programs. The list of broken promises goes on and on.

In Ontario we are experiencing the same approach to government by the McGuinty Liberals as their federal cousins: Say one thing to get elected and then do something entirely different when you are in office. It's the politics of deceit, and it defines the Liberal Party of Ontario and their federal cohorts.

On Monday, June 28, I urge Ontario voters to send a message to the McGuinty and Martin Liberals that we are sick and tired of their deceit, betrayals and broken promises, and we are not going to put up with it any more. Out with the rascals.

FAMILY HEALTH TEAMS

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): I want to tell you today about the little community that can. Health Minister George Smitherman said, "Our government will move decisively on primary care renewal by acting on our commitment to create family health teams that will provide comprehensive family health services around the clock."

The community of Harrow and Colchester South, in the town of Essex, is a little community that can, because they're going to take up this challenge. They've been faced with a doctor shortage. They have a doctor who is 75 years old and one who's maturing, and it services an area of about 10,000 people. So now the people in Harrow and Colchester South have formed a committee. There are some 18 volunteers, headed up by Brian Gray and others, and Dana Howe, a former person in the city of Windsor who is involved in community services, has joined them.

The Ontario government, Roy Romanow and I are in complete agreement on the tremendous benefits of community health centres. A community health centre in

Harrow and Colchester South will be great news for all residents. It has my full support. I know the people in Harrow and Colchester very well, and they are the community that can and will.

PUBLIC HEALTH

Mr Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): I would like to take a brief moment to congratulate our government on taking a big step forward in improving public health for all Ontarians. I know this is something my constituents and many of my colleagues' constituents feel is very important.

Yesterday Minister Smitherman and the chief medical officer of health, Dr Sheela Basrur, announced a new three-year action plan to restore public health in Ontario. This plan will help us move toward our goal of making Ontarians the healthiest Canadians.

Our government is immediately investing \$41.7 million in new funding in public health. This is on top of the \$273 million already earmarked for public health for 2004-05. This will grow to \$469 million a year beginning in 2007-08, as was announced in our budget.

This new money will help establish a new Ontario Health Protection and Promotion Agency. We will also increase the independence of the chief medical officer of health. We will also immediately establish a Provincial Infectious Disease Advisory Committee.

Finally, we are increasing the number of medical and scientific personnel to establish new surveillance, communications and IT capability. I would like all my constituents to know that the McGuinty government is taking immediate action so that the people of Ontario see real improvements to their public health system starting this year, and that Ontarians can be confident that with each passing year of our plan, the public health system will be stronger.

HEALTH CARE

Mr Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): I'd like to take this opportunity today to discourage the Alberta provincial government from taking further steps toward the creation of a two-tiered health care system in the province of Alberta.

It's absolutely shameful for Stephen Harper to support such an initiative. In December 2001, Harper encouraged the Alberta government to take aim at the Canada Health Act. It would seem that this week, Stephen Harper's encouragement has come to fruition. Premier Ralph Klein is proposing health reforms and has admitted they violate the Canada Health Act. Releasing a portion of their plan, frankly, is not enough. We all know there's a hidden agenda out there. Stephen Harper can run from it, but the people of Canada will know. This would give all Canadians a full perspective on changes to health care that may take place in Alberta.

In contrast to the Harper-Klein school of health care delivery, our government is taking steps to stabilize and

maintain a publicly funded health care system within the limits of the Canada Health Act. We've introduced measures to strengthen accountability, especially in our long-term-care homes. This accountability is necessary to protect the health and safety of residents.

The creation of the Ontario Health Protection and Promotion Agency will enhance credibility and transparency by making a distinction between scientific advice and policy-making within the ministry. We will establish high standards of care within the domain of the Canada Health Act. I challenge Ralph Klein and Stephen Harper to do the same.

MEMBERS' EXPENDITURES

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): I beg to inform the House that I have today laid upon the table the individual members' expenditures for the fiscal year 2003-04.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): We have with us today in the Speaker's gallery the Quebec Minister of Canadian Intergovernmental Affairs and Native Affairs, the Honourable Benoît Pelletier. Please join me in welcoming our distinguished guest.

We also have with us today in the Speaker's gallery the recipients of the internationally recognized medal of la francophonie, l'ordre de la Pléiade, for their outstanding contributions to French-speaking communities in the province. Please also join me in welcoming our honoured guests.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the report on intended appointments dated June 23, 2004, of the standing committee on government agencies.

Pursuant to standing order 106(e)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

MANDATORY GUNSHOT REPORTING ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 SUR LA DÉCLARATION OBLIGATOIRE DES BLESSURES PAR BALLE

Mr Kwinter moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 110, An Act to require the disclosure of information to police respecting persons being treated for gunshot wounds / *Projet de loi 110, Loi exigeant la divulgation à la police de renseignements en ce qui concerne les personnes traitées pour blessure par balle.*

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Kwinter?

Hon Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services): I'll be making a statement during ministerial statements.

1350

GENOCIDE MEMORIAL WEEK ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 SUR LA SEMAINE COMMÉMORATIVE DES GÉNOCIDES

Mr Dunlop moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 111, An Act to proclaim Genocide Memorial Week in Ontario / *Projet de loi 111, Loi proclamant la Semaine commémorative des génocides en Ontario.*

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): This bill proclaims the week beginning on the fourth Monday in March in each year as Genocide Memorial Week, and it follows a bill that was introduced previously by Mr Bob Wood, the member for London.

REMOVING A MEMBER FROM THE TORONTO POLICE SERVICES BOARD ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 DESTITUANT UN MEMBRE DE LA COMMISSION DE SERVICES POLICIERS DE TORONTO

Ms Churley moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 112, An Act respecting the removal of a member from the Toronto Police Services Board / *Projet de loi 112, Loi concernant la destitution d'un membre de la Commission de services policiers de Toronto.*

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I had indicated in this Legislature that after several attempts to get the government to remove Norm Gardner from the police services board, they would not do that, so today I've introduced a bill which gives the Lieutenant Governor in Council the power to revoke the appointment of Norman Gardner to the Toronto Police Services Board, and if this power is exercised, the Lieutenant Governor in Council would be required to appoint a new person to the board. I should be clear that certain rights would be extinguished on the exercise of this power, but this is a power that the government must be given to remove this gentleman from the board. I've got nothing personal

against Norm Gardner, but given the dysfunctionality of the board and the fact that he was asked to leave and is appealing and refuses to step down, I think it is critical that this bill be passed today so we can get on with helping the police services board to go forward.

ASIAN HERITAGE ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004

SUR LE PATRIMOINE ASIATIQUE

Mr Wong moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 113, An Act to proclaim the month of May as Asian Heritage Month / *Projet de loi 113, Loi proclamant le mois de mai Mois du patrimoine asiatique.*

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Tony C. Wong (Markham): In Ontario, diversity is our strength, and immigrants from many Asian countries have chosen this great province to be their home. It is appropriate to recognize and pay tribute to the contributions that Asians have made and continue to make to the development and general welfare of Ontario. The month of May has been proclaimed to be Asian Heritage Month in the Senate, pursuant to a motion put forward by Senator Vivienne Poy in December 2001, and this follows that.

VISITOR

Mrs Liz Sandals (Guelph-Wellington): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to introduce the mother of Olivia Whetung Cole, who is a page from Guelph-Wellington. We're pleased to welcome her today.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): That's not a point of order.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I move that pursuant to standing order 9 (c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 pm to 9:30 pm on Wednesday, June 23, 2004, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion, say "aye."

All those against, say "nay."

I think the ayes have it.

Call in the members. There will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1356 to 1401.

The Speaker: Mr Duncan has moved government notice of motion 149.

All those in favour, please rise to be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne
Bartolucci, Rick
Bentley, Christopher
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Brotten, Laurel C.
Brown, Michael A.
Brownell, Jim
Bryant, Michael
Caplan, David
Chambers, Mary Anne V.
Colle, Mike
Craitor, Kim
Crozier, Bruce
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Di Cocco, Caroline
Dombrowsky, Leona
Duguid, Brad
Duncan, Dwight
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Gerretsen, John
Gravelle, Michael
Jeffrey, Linda
Kwinter, Monte
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Levac, Dave
Marsales, Judy
Matthews, Deborah
McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine
Mossop, Jennifer F.
Parsons, Ernie

Patten, Richard
Peters, Steve
Phillips, Gerry
Pupatello, Sandra
Racco, Mario G.
Ramal, Khalil
Sandals, Liz
Takhar, Harinder S.
Van Bommel, Maria
Watson, Jim
Wilkinson, John
Wong, Tony C.
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

The Speaker: All those against, please rise to be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arnott, Ted
Barrett, Toby
Bisson, Gilles
Churley, Marilyn
Dunlop, Garfield
Hardeman, Ernie
Horwath, Andrea
Jackson, Cameron
Kormos, Peter
Marchese, Rosario

Martel, Shelley
Martiniuk, Gerry
Prue, Michael
Runciman, Robert W.
Yakabuski, John

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 46; the nays are 15.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I believe we have unanimous consent to allow a member of the official opposition to move second reading of Bill 104, with immediate passage, and then a member of the third party to move third reading of Bill 104, followed by immediate passage and no further debate.

The Speaker: Do we have unanimous consent? Agreed.

TRANSITIONAL PHYSICIAN PAYMENT REVIEW ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 SUR LA RÉVISION PROVISoire DES PAIEMENTS D'HONORAIRES DE MÉDECINS

Mr Runciman, on behalf of Mr Smitherman, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 104, An Act to amend the Health Insurance Act and the Ministry of Health Appeal and Review Boards Act, 1998 / Projet de loi 104, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'assurance-santé et la Loi de 1998 sur les commissions d'appel et de révision du ministère de la Santé.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

TRANSITIONAL PHYSICIAN PAYMENT REVIEW ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 SUR LA RÉVISION PROVISoire DES PAIEMENTS D'HONORAIRES DE MÉDECINS

Mr Kormos, on behalf of Mr Smitherman, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 104, An Act to amend the Health Insurance Act and the Ministry of Health Appeal and Review Boards Act, 1998 / Projet de loi 104, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'assurance-santé et la Loi de 1998 sur les commissions d'appel et de révision du ministère de la Santé.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

REPORTING OF GUNSHOT WOUNDS

Hon Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services): I rise this afternoon to announce legislation that would, if passed, make Ontario communities safer. The McGuinty government is committed to delivering the real, positive change that will make Ontario communities safer.

Until now, hospitals have been able to use their own discretion on whether or not to notify police when they treat someone with a gunshot wound. Today, I am introducing legislation that, if passed, would rectify that situation by making it mandatory for public hospitals and prescribed health care facilities to report to police when they treat a person with a gunshot wound.

Facilities would be required to report the name of the person being treated, if it is known, and the location of the facility. The disclosure would have to occur orally as soon as it is reasonably practicable without interfering with the treatment of the patient or disrupting the normal operation of the facility.

This legislation, if passed, would put Ontario at the forefront of legislation in this area. Forty-five American states have some form of similar legislation. This legislation, if passed, would make Ontario the only province in Canada with legislation that makes the reporting of gunshot wounds mandatory.

In Ontario, it's mandatory for businesses such as auto body shops to report bullet holes in cars. Why would we require the reporting of bullet holes in cars but not bullet holes in people?

The policy about reporting to police has varied from hospital to hospital, even from doctor to doctor. Emergency medical attendants also have policies in place relating to notifying police when responding to incidents

where a victim has been shot. We're fixing that imbalance today.

Our legislation would minimize the legal and ethical dilemma facing medical staff on whether or not to report such incidents to the police. This legislation would protect health care facilities from liability so they could give authorized information to the police without worrying about their exposure to liability.

The legislation I'm introducing this afternoon, if passed, would remove any discrepancies and standardize the procedure for reporting across the province.

What is just as important is what the proposed legislation doesn't do. If passed, the legislation would not make it mandatory for family physicians to report gunshot wound patients to police, thus maintaining the integrity of the doctor-patient relationship. Nor would the proposed legislation negatively impact on any reporting procedures already in place between police and hospitals. The bill would not prevent a facility from disclosing information to the police if the facility is required or permitted to do so under other legislation or by law.

The policing community supports this legislation. The Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police and the Toronto Police Service have asked for this legislation. And just last week, the board of directors of the Ontario Medical Association passed a resolution supporting mandatory reporting. The Ontario Association of Police Services Boards recently wrote to the Premier asking my ministry to work with police stakeholders to examine what could be done to make reporting mandatory.

We're sure the citizens of Ontario will welcome this legislation. By strengthening the communities in which we live, we are providing the people of Ontario with a quality of life that is second to none.

WATER QUALITY

Hon Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment): Safe and clean drinking water is essential to protecting the health and quality of life enjoyed by the people in this great province. People deserve safe, clean and liveable communities to call home. Our government understands this, and we are delivering positive change to improve the lives of the people of Ontario.

One of these positive changes is a new emphasis on protecting the sources of our drinking water. Progress has been made in treatment, monitoring and reporting, but source protection has remained the missing link.

Taking the recommendations of Commissioner O'Connor as our guide, we are fulfilling a vision of water protection that provides safeguards from the source to the tap.

1410

In a few moments I will tell the honourable members about a significant new action we are taking today. First, I want to remind the House of the tremendous progress being made by our government. We have increased the number of water inspectors in Ontario by 25%. We have imposed a one-year moratorium on new and expanded

water-taking permits that remove water from watersheds. We are proposing tough new rules for water-takings. We have invested \$13 million toward the cleanup and protection of the Great Lakes. We have announced an advisory council on drinking water quality and testing standards. We created an Industrial Pollution Action Team to make recommendations on preventing spills and dangerous emissions. We set tough new training and certification requirements for water system operators.

Since our government took office in October, we have implemented 23 of the recommendations made by Commissioner O'Connor in his report on the Walkerton inquiry. I believe it is a remarkable record of accomplishment in a short period of time. It is a testament to this government's determination to see the job through.

Today I am pleased to advise the honourable members that the text of proposed legislation for source protection planning has been placed on the Environmental Bill of Rights registry for a 60-day public comment period. It deals with the development and approval of source protection plans. The proposed legislation looks at how source protection areas and regions will be established, as well as roles and responsibilities for those developing the plans. It takes a watershed-based approach to source protection, addressing all sources of drinking water, inland lakes, rivers, groundwater and the Great Lakes.

We are also working on the implementation aspects of this legislation with the two expert advisory committees that I established this past December. The two committees will provide guidance on scientific issues, funding mechanisms and implementation tools. Following public comment, the ministry will combine the planning and implementation components into one comprehensive source protection bill. It is my hope to introduce the final bill later this year.

The people of Ontario rely on well-protected drinking water for their health and well-being. Today the McGuinty government has moved a step closer to introducing comprehensive source protection legislation that will help protect our water before it enters our drinking water systems.

VISITORS

VISITEURS

Hon Madeleine Meilleur (Minister of Culture, minister responsible for francophone affairs): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to introduce my dear friend, neighbour and constituent Gisèle Richer, who tonight will receive l'insigne de l'ordre de la Pléiade for her contribution in the francophone community both in Ontario and elsewhere in Canada.

M. Gilles Bisson (Timmins-Baie James): Sur un point d'ordre, monsieur le Président : comment ne peut-on pas prendre l'occasion, avec cette déclaration, pour dire que M. Philippe Boissonneault, avec sa famille, et M. Sylvain Lacroix aussi, qui vont être conférés avec

l'ordre de la Pléiade, sont ici avec nous aujourd'hui. Merci.

Mr Vic Dhillon (Brampton West-Mississauga): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I want to welcome the International Seniors Club of Brampton. They're sitting up there in the lobby.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): I thought I did a wonderful job of introducing those who are getting the awards today, but thank you for that. That was another point of order.

REPORTING OF GUNSHOT WOUNDS

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'm pleased to rise today to be able to make a few comments on the introduction of the bill by the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. I believe that is the minister's first bill introduced in this House, and at the onset I'll tell you that we will be supporting this piece of legislation. It follows quite clearly on the fact that our House leader, Mr Runciman, introduced a notice of motion on December 11 that says, "That in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should introduce legislation to require hospitals and physicians to report gunshot wounds and knife injuries to their local police service." He filed that on December 11, 2003.

As the critic for community safety and correctional services, I've met with a number of our stakeholders, some of those mentioned by the minister. Since the beginning of the year, the Ontario Medical Association and the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police and basically all the stakeholders I've talked to have very much supported this legislation. It has been led by the fact that here in the province we've had some gun-related crimes this year, more serious than a lot of years, and it has come to the forefront. I think it's time this bill was passed.

In my opinion, it's unfortunate that we didn't introduce it a little earlier. It would have been nice to see this bill passed into law as soon as possible. The way we're going now, when we come back for the fall session I don't think we'll see it proclaimed until probably around November 1 at the earliest, which is a full year after this government took office.

This bill also brings something else to our attention, and that's the fact that following a disastrous budget, following the fact that police officers in this province were promised by the McGuinty government to have 1,000 new people added to their ranks, the government failed them both in the throne speech and in the recent budget. What's cute about this and what's kind of warm and cozy is that this bill is introduced two days before the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police annual conference in Windsor, which is next week. The minister has got to talk about something very positive at that conference. He can't talk about the 1,000 new police officers that you promised, because that doesn't exist, so this bill will be the topic of conversation. I applaud him for some good political moves in that area.

We will be supporting this bill. It's high time that it was put into legislation. I appreciate this opportunity to respond to this today.

WATER QUALITY

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): Another day, another slew of ministerial announcements to divert the public's attention from the fact that as of July 1, working families across Ontario will be digging into their pockets to pay the Liberal health tax. It seems that this government feels it can cushion the blow of this cash grab, as they hurry out the door for their summer vacation, by filling the airwaves with legislative proposals and feel-good motherhood announcements—anything to hide the fact that the Liberal broken-promise budget is about to take a bite out of people's wallets and that health premiums are going to pay for infrastructure, sewers, perhaps water now, despite the government's promise that it would go to health care.

Take the source water protection proposal. Where are the dollars coming from? The Liberal budget on page 12 indicates that the Ministry of the Environment is about to see a 12% cut to its operating budget. That's 12% fewer dollars to be spent on environmental initiatives. So I'm interested to hear exactly where this money is coming from. Is it being transferred from other parts of the ministry? Is it a growing list of items funded through the government's so-called health care premium?

On the water-taking issue, I agree that we simply cannot issue permits with no regard for the future of our watersheds. This government must take into consideration water conservation, the impact on groundwater, the impact on surface water. We all know how important it is to ascertain the health of our streams and lakes and the habitat that is so dependent on that health.

However, I must reiterate the fact that as Liberal government moves forward with source water protection, it must ensure that there is a process of partnership with those it is impacting. We need partnerships. Agricultural groups need to determine the impact that proposed source water protection policies may have on our farmers. Agriculture needs to be recognized as a key stakeholder. They need to have their ideas and concerns discussed in a professional, science-based and organized manner.

REPORTING OF GUNSHOT WOUNDS

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): New Democrats look forward to the debate around the bill introduced for first reading today by the Minister of Community Safety. Clearly, the issue being addressed is the proliferation of guns, especially handguns, illegal guns, that are being used, quite frankly, in no small part by young people shooting each other, most dramatically here in the city of Toronto but elsewhere in the province as well.

We understand that the police have a very clear interest in connecting the dots when it comes to the

illegal use of these firearms, and especially handguns. That means that the police would have a real interest in discovering people who appeared for treatment after having been attacked with a firearm.

1420

However, there are concerns. It's noted that this would be the first province in Canada to implement this type of procedure. I also note, having read the bill, that it purports to compel the reporting of these incidents with no consequences for not reporting the incidents. One questions then the enforceability of it. The OMA—I spoke with them earlier today—tells me it supports this legislation. It's easy for the OMA to support the legislation, because it's not doctors who are compelled to report. In fact, physicians are exempted from being compelled to report if a gunshot victim attends at the physician's office.

Of course, guns aren't the only weapons used. Knives are used in attacks upon people. Indeed, we have to consider the obligation of medical personnel, of health professionals to report any crime they become aware of.

There is a concern whether or not this type of regime creates a disincentive for people to attend at hospitals for treatment. I'm not going to make prejudgments about that, but I say this bill has to go to committee. There is a great deal that has to be said about the bill in view of the fact that the bill impacts not just on doctors—as a matter of fact, very little on doctors—but on the broader range of health professionals, who are the ones who are going to be called upon, in hospitals and other similar facilities, to do this reporting.

At the end of the day, the real issue is the fact that we have not come to grips with the growing number of illegal firearms out there on the streets being used by criminals. Two billion dollars spent by the federal Liberals on their phony gun registry has done zip to control the proliferation of illegal handguns being used by kids to shoot other kids.

We've got to make sure that at the end of the day we give the cops the real resources they need—the staffing they need, the tools they need—to go out there to apprehend the people peddling illegal firearms and to apprehend the people using them, and that means resources for police departments. That will be much of the focus of the debate around this bill as well.

WATER QUALITY

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): To the Minister of the Environment, this was yet again another diversion announcement to try to get people's minds off the broken promise on tax increases and off the fact there's going to be a 12% cut in the Ministry of the Environment's operating budget starting next year.

Interjection.

Ms Churley: Hey, I started to let you know about that.

But even worse, the minister announced today that she is just going to put a white paper out there for discussion,

nothing about implementation and where we go from here. I want to point out to you several things. Listen carefully.

Today is the day a whole bunch of environmental groups have come forward slamming the government for allowing the King City big pipe to go ahead. They say, "It flies in the face of the province of Ontario's post-Walkerton promises to pursue source water protection." That's one. Secondly, I've pointed out in this place before that when it comes to water protection the Liberals are actually lowering standards for drinking water by failing to fix regulation 903—remember that?—to deal with well water. You know what? Another Walkerton could happen if they don't fix that.

Furthermore, there are things that can be done now if the government were clearly committed to source protection; and I pointed these out before. They could bring back CURB—Clean Up Rural Beaches. The program the NDP brought in and the Tories cancelled needs to be brought back to help the small farmers keep their wells from being contaminated.

They should put a moratorium on factory hog farms. I've got a private member's bill I've put forward—no movement. There's evidence that could be a huge source of water contamination at the source. There is one in the minister's own riding and she is not dealing with that.

These are the kinds of things the minister and the government need to be looking at right now, if they are truly committed to source protection.

Let me come back to the big pipe. If they allow that to go ahead, they will lose all credibility when it comes to source water protection in this province.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Earlier I had introduced someone in the Speaker's gallery who had not arrived. I would like now to recognize the Quebec Minister of Canadian Intergovernmental Affairs and Native Affairs, the Honourable Benoît Pelletier. Please join me in giving him a warm welcome.

ORAL QUESTIONS

CANCER TREATMENT

Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington): In the absence of the Premier, my question is to the Minister of Health. Minister, before the election, your Premier, Dalton McGuinty, said that he was going to save our health care system, that he was going to provide significant new dollars. Then, after the election, you and your government said that health care spending was out of control, that costs and expectations had to be reined in, that they were out of control.

On six occasions since May of this year, I have brought to your attention concerns presented by Cancer

Care Ontario and proof that your budget constraints had forced Cancer Care Ontario to stop reimbursement for cancer patients in one drug in particular, and delayed or deferred other life-saving drugs.

On June 16, I raised in this House the case of Mr Doug Henderson, a cancer patient. He's with us in the House. He appeared in this morning's Sun. He considers himself very fortunate that he can afford the \$50,000 for the Rituximab treatments that he received in Indianapolis. Doug Henderson wants to know, why is it, Minister, that you have chosen cancer treatment in this province and its advocate, Cancer Care Ontario, as your battleground for containing your health care budget and its costs?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I ask the member opposite, why is it that you continue to be involved in the campaign to mislead and misinform the people of the province on this issue? Let's be very—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order. I would ask you to withdraw that. It's unparliamentary.

Hon Mr Smitherman: Yes, I will. I want to be very clear. Cancer Care Ontario continues to operate in exactly the way that it has since 1995. That works like this: They make the decisions on the basis of which drugs should be covered, and they base that on the scientific evidence.

What is new is that this year we have already indicated to Cancer Care Ontario that we will make an investment of at least 25% more for the cancer drugs that they deem necessary to provide the utmost of care for the people of Ontario who are struggling with cancer.

On this point, the honourable member has been active in a campaign designed to make it look like there's political decision-making with respect to which drugs are available to people at a time. This is not the case. This is the role of scientists, and this is the role of scientists who are operating on behalf of Cancer Care Ontario.

With respect to the honourable member's assertion that we're involved in some campaign about health care, he's right. It's a campaign that adds 7% to the budget of health care in the province of Ontario, for a total investment of \$2.2 billion in new dollars.

Mr Jackson: Minister, you were warned, and your staff were warned, rather, back in February—and I provided proof to your Premier—that a drug had essentially been delisted for the first time in our province. The fact is, you have not been doing your homework, and you have not been doing your job as the minister. Cancer Care Ontario has cut a specific treatment access to stay within your ministry's rigid budget guidelines. More and more Ontarians are now going to the US for treatment—not just your constituent Mr Henderson, but many, many more.

In the House today is Mr Chris Kuzik. He's aged 59. He sold his home in Oshawa. He moved to Peterborough, where it was more affordable, to prepare for the last years of his life, to pay for his Rituximab treatments in Rochester. The tumours in his neck were so large that he

could barely shave. Yet, after the treatments that he's received, they have shrunk and nearly disappeared. He wants me to ask you today why you have failed to listen to Cancer Care Ontario's recommendations to give treatment to all Ontario residents. This request was given to you months ago.

Hon Mr Smitherman: What is incredibly important to note is that the member will well know that I can't address individual cases, that it's inappropriate for the Minister of Health to do so.

Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): Shame on you.

Hon Mr Smitherman: What? For following the rules?

The role of Cancer Care Ontario remains entirely unaffected by any decisions that this government has taken. What's clear is that we've indicated to Cancer Care Ontario that they have our full support, and we have the full expectation that their drug budget will grow by at least 25% this year. We've indicated to them, and I've indicated to this member in the House on multiple occasions, that the government of Ontario stands by the people of Ontario who need cancer support. What that means on the issue of drugs is that this government has indicated very, very clearly to Cancer Care Ontario that if they believe there's a product that Ontarians need, they should list it and they should use it, and we will work with them to foot the bill.

Let me be very clear on the issue of the bill. We have a full expectation that that will be at least 25% larger than it was last year.

1430

Mr Jackson: Your budget year as Minister of Health is almost one quarter over, and you have not responded. You have not flowed the dollars. You are sitting on this money, and cancer patients are increasingly going to the United States.

The review team—the oncology site team, the haematology site review team—approved this drug months ago. Cancer Care Ontario approved it with their policy department months ago. You are sitting on the money and you are not flowing it to these people. Antonella Artuso of the Toronto Sun confirmed what I raised in this House last week, that Cancer Care Ontario was forced to remove up to \$4 million in discretionary funding that was previously flowing to cancer treatment centres across our province.

Your Liberal government must assure the people who are dying of cancer in this province that you will free Cancer Care Ontario's budget so that they can provide the care and save the lives of Ontarians. Instead of your agenda of capping and controlling health care costs in cancer, let them save lives.

Hon Mr Smitherman: My agenda, with all due respect, is the agenda of our government, and our agenda is clear. It is to make Ontarians the healthiest Canadians.

We've been very, very clear on the issue of cancer drugs. We fully expect, and we have fully indicated to the board of Cancer Care Ontario and to the people who run Cancer Care Ontario, that this government is

prepared to stand by them and to back them up on any scientific decision they make about what product, what drug, should be made available to people in the province of Ontario who are struggling with the challenges of cancer. That means, as a bare minimum, that we are prepared as a government to increase their drug budget by 25%.

But let me go further. We've indicated to them that if they don't find that to be sufficient, they should let us know. The fact of the matter is that the board of Cancer Care Ontario and the decisions around which products will be listed, provided and made available is exactly the same process it has been in this province since 1995.

CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): My question today is for the Attorney General. We are all aware of the recent funding reannouncements of our government's initiatives that were made by your government to fight child pornography. First of all, it was the \$700,000 that was announced to help the Toronto Police Service track sex offenders. That was something you were shamed into. Of course, there was \$1 million announced for the OPP to strengthen their ability to fight child pornography as well.

You are sitting on a surplus of at least \$40 million in the victims' justice fund. This money could be used to help municipal police services combat child pornography. Tell us now, which police services have received money from this fund as a result of your decisions, not those made by this party when we were in government?

Hon Michael Bryant (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): It is true we have made a number of announcements with respect to the provision of funds under the victims' justice fund. We inherited a significant surplus under the victims' justice fund. We want to make sure the money goes to victims, of course. We want to make sure that it's done in a way that makes sense.

We also want to make sure, and I know the member will agree with this, that we have geographic equality so that no matter where you live in the province of Ontario, a victim is going to get services provided by this government that will not only ensure they are not revictimized, but will ensure that the services they need to get on with their lives are provided. I look forward to providing more information to the member on that, perhaps in the supplementary.

Mr Dunlop: There are a number of municipal police services outside of Toronto that are anxiously awaiting approval for funding from the victims' justice fund to fight child pornography. I think you know about that. It's my understanding that they are tired of waiting for this money; they're tired of your ministry dragging their heels on this. Can you please name the municipal police services that have already been denied funding from your ministry's victims' justice fund to combat child pornography?

Hon Mr Bryant: None, I say to the member. We're working with these police services. We're working with them to determine the best way to spend the money. I know that they've been extremely co-operative. I just want to take this opportunity to thank those police services for the work they are doing and for working with our ministry so that we make sure we get this done right. I know that will have the support of this member as well.

Mr Dunlop: The minister should know that I'm aware of at least one municipal police service outside Toronto that has already been flatly denied funding from the victims' justice fund to fight child pornography. I've been told that the unit that deals with child pornography in the Toronto Police Service is the third-best in the world. Our government had provided \$2 million over two years for this unit, but its funding runs out at the end of this year. This again is money from the victims' justice fund. Minister, are you going to leave the Toronto Police Service on pins and needles until the last minute, or will you stand in this House right now and tell us exactly when their funding to fight child pornography will be renewed?

Hon Mr Bryant: The member is wrong. In fact, we are working with these police services. As you said, there are some pilot projects that run out at the end of the year. Obviously we want to give them plenty of notice. They should probably expect to get some final word within the next couple of weeks. We've got plenty of time. We're working with the police services, and it is actually working extremely well, I'm happy to report. Really, it's a period of collaboration and co-operation. We're doing some things a little bit new, but more on that to come. Of course the victims' justice fund has got to be used in a way that serves victims, prevents revictimization, and that's what we're going to do.

HEALTH CARE

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Health. Minister, your Premier keeps trying to claim that he is the champion of health care, but every claim he makes turns out to be false. First, he said he would never impose health care premiums on working families because they're regressive and unfair; then he did just that. Then he tried to pretend that your \$2-billion tax grab from working families is progressive, but a single-parent mom with an income of \$25,000 a year will see her provincial income tax go up by 24%. He said that every penny of your regressive and unfair tax grab would be spent on health care services. We now know much of it will go for sewer pipe. He said the health tax would fund a vaccination program for children, but then we discovered that was false as well. The federal government's paying for the vaccination program.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Question.

Mr Hampton: Minister, given all your Premier's broken promises on health care, why should anyone believe any promise Liberals make on health care?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): The honourable member perhaps doesn't want to take it from me. Just let me talk about the issue of public health from yesterday.

Here's what Dr David Walker said about our initiatives with respect to public health: "Operation Health Protection comprehensively addresses the recommendations of the expert panel on SARS. I commend the minister for his response to our work. Implementation of this plan should restore public health and the confidence of the public."

Dr David Naylor said, "These are very important steps forward in renewing public health in Ontario. The plan unquestionably covers several important areas that needed urgent attention."

Doris Grinspun said, "The report is good news for Ontarians and a great step forward to recognize the vital role of nurses in public health in this province."

I think what's really going on here is very clear: The honourable member has taken such a healthy dose of cynicism that he remains unable to separate his fiction from the fact of the matter, and the fact of the matter is that all across Ontario community organizations related to long-term care, home care, primary care reform, mental health supports and public health renewal are celebrating elements of our government's budget.

Mr Hampton: I recognize that you and your Premier are very good at making speeches and boastful announcements and getting a day of headlines, but then later it turns out it's all false.

I heard and saw your boastful announcement yesterday that you are showing smart leadership on public health, but then I discover a letter from you to the medical officers of health across the province where you tell them that you're going to cut their budget for fighting West Nile virus by 22%. Behold another boastful announcement. You spin it for the media and then, while everyone's looking at the announcement, you send out a letter saying, "Oh, by the way, we're going to cut your budget to fight West Nile by 22%."

Tell me, Minister, is cutting the budget to fight a virus like West Nile by 22% smart public health policy?

Hon Mr Smitherman: What I think is incredibly smart public health policy in this province is, at the end of a year, to gather around the scientists, the people in our public health branch and the people in the public health units across Ontario to evaluate the program we've had in place with respect to West Nile and to make changes that people agree are necessary.

1440

So what you see in our West Nile plan are alterations from 2003. Let me give you—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Finished?

Hon Mr Smitherman: No. There are two points that I think are incredibly important to note. The first is with respect to the changes we've made: more mosquito testing, not less, and secondly, because we know that the campaigns that have been run on television have had the

effect of giving more information to people over time, we have been able to have a reduction in the amount of money we're spending.

Mr Hampton: We have a new Liberal vocabulary for a cut. It's called an alteration.

Here is the truth, Minister. You're telling municipalities that are already out there engaged in the fight against West Nile that halfway through the fiscal year you're cutting their budgets by 22%. For the city of Toronto, for example, that's a \$700,000 cut, and the only way they can find that is to go out and cut other programs drastically. Minister, maybe you are not aware of this, but people can die from the West Nile virus. People can become very seriously ill from it. So while you claim to show enlightened leadership on public health policy, why are you slashing the budget for this dangerous virus?

Hon Mr Smitherman: The honourable member, in such a flurry of hyperbole, misses a few points. Firstly, we're nowhere near halfway through a fiscal year, which began on April 1. In fact, West Nile virus surveillance in this province only began on May 12. So I don't know where the honourable member gets his information.

The fact of the matter is very, very clear. At the end of a year, we get involved with the people who deliver the program and we make changes to the program, no doubt, to reflect the best information we have. I don't apologize for this; I champion it. I say it seems appropriate that when there is a health risk that changes or is altered or where we find new information about the way to fight it, of course we should make appropriate changes.

I'm pleased to say that one of the other things that has resulted in a reduction of spending on this file is that we have been able to not move forward, to save money for the hiring of seven additional people in the Ministry of Health.

The Speaker: New question.

WEST NILE VIRUS

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): The minister illustrates he is not really aware of what is going on. The municipal budgets begin January 1. They're halfway through their fiscal year, and you're telling them to cut 22% from their budgets to fight a serious virus.

Eighty-nine people in southern Ontario became ill from the West Nile virus last year. You say it's not serious. According to your own ministry Web site, "Symptoms of West Nile virus can vary from illness such as West Nile fever to serious neurological illness such as encephalitis." That's what your own Web site says.

But apparently, in all your boasting, this is not a priority for you. You'd rather give speeches and hold press conferences. But when it comes to fighting West Nile virus, you quietly try to cut the budget. Are you going to retract this 22% cut, or is your word as good as your Premier's?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I'm not going to retract it, but what the honourable member ought to do is retract the stream

of misinformation he just presented. The fact of the matter is that he makes it seem like the lion's share of the expenditure we make related to West Nile virus is done at the municipal level. It is a partnership. Most of the reductions came from the savings to be found at the ministry end, like a reduction in television advertising from \$7.2 million to \$4 million.

If public health officials in the land are so riled up by this, then why was it that yesterday the associate chief medical officer of health in York region said this: "This action plan marks an important turning point for public health in Ontario. I am pleased to support this plan and look forward to working with the provincial and municipal partners to strengthen public health across the province"? Why is that? Because he knows we just put \$25 million additional into public health units in the province of Ontario.

Mr Hampton: Well, I can hardly wait until that medical officer of health sees this letter, because the letter is very interesting. You're going to cut the budget by 22%. In the summer, when we should be focused on West Nile, when the mosquitoes are becoming a serious health hazard, you're going to cut the budget. But you also say this: If they contracted out their West Nile effort, then they keep the money. It's OK if you privatize it; you won't get cut. But if you are doing it in-house, as a public service, then you want to cut the budget by 22%. This also breaks your government's promise that there wasn't going to be more downloading on to municipalities, because municipalities will have to go elsewhere to find the money. That's downloading.

Are you going to retract this? Or is your promise on public health about as good as your Premier's promises—not worth anything?

Hon Mr Smitherman: There goes the honourable member talking about his party's record on auto insurance again. The fact of the matter remains incredibly clear to the people involved in this on the front lines. Because of the paramountcy of protecting the public interest, we have enhanced our capacity to do surveillance and more mosquito testing. That is clearly noted in our initiative this year. This program has been re-profiled this year because public health units and the public health officials that represent the government of Ontario have determined that there is a more appropriate way to run the program. The honourable member—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order.

Hon Mr Smitherman: Please give the member from Nickel Belt a question.

The fact of the matter remains very, very clear. We have a program in this province with respect to West Nile. When combined with the additional resources that we are today delivering to public health units across this province, it enhances—does not diminish, but dramatically enhances—our capacity to protect the health of the people of the province of Ontario and—

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr Hampton: I want the people of Ontario to know this: While people can die of West Nile; while people can

become debilitated, lifelong, from West Nile; while people who are frail and elderly are especially vulnerable to West Nile, what does this minister talk about? He talks about "re-profiling." He says, "We're slightly going to amend the budget."

Why don't you have the courage to stand up and say what it is? You're cutting the budgets of medical officers of health by 22% in their fight against West Nile. Why don't you have the honesty to stand up and say what you're really doing instead of pretending it's something else?

Hon Mr Smitherman: Why don't you have the honesty to present the facts as they are? The fact of the matter is that there's no truth whatsoever to your allegation about a 22% cut. Your blacked-out letter is a bunch of BS—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Could I have the minister respond, please.

Hon Mr Smitherman: The member is attempting to distort the facts to back up his argument. It is an unsettling situation. For the member's—

The Speaker: Order. Could I have a new question, please.

COURT RULING

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leeds-Grenville): I have a question for the Attorney General. It deals with the recent acquittal of former child actor Tyson Talbot on charges related to the death of Christopher Shelton, a 23-year-old pre-law student. I think it's fair to say that the acquittal has outraged the victim's family and many Ontarians. As you know, the trial judge refused to let the jury know of Mr Talbot's relevant criminal history, that at the time of his trial he was also facing a charge of attempted murder in another attack and that he had a significant number of previous convictions for violent crimes such as assault, assault causing bodily harm and assault with a weapon.

Minister, will you assure Christopher Shelton's family today that this blot on our justice system will be challenged and that you will direct the crown to appeal this verdict?

1450

Hon Michael Bryant (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): I thank the member for raising these concerns and these facts. You will appreciate that the matter is still in a period in which we have to exercise some independent discretion here. I can tell the member that we are looking at this very closely, and that as soon as we have some information I'll undertake to provide it to him. But, for now, it is something that we have to look at closely before we announce any decision on it.

Mr Runciman: I appreciate that the clock is ticking, as the Attorney General knows. This is an all-too-familiar incident for those of us who can recall the Alison Parrott murder as well: the practice of a judge not allowing the person charged to be cross-examined on their relevant

criminal history. In effect, the jury is denied the truth. Too often, the exercise of judicial discretion allows a distorted and inaccurate picture to be presented to a jury.

Minister, I understand your situation with respect to announcing an appeal, but will you today commit to raising this issue at the next federal-provincial-territorial justice ministers' conference to put a stop to this judicial practice and ensure that those charged can be cross-examined on their relevant criminal history?

Hon Mr Bryant: I know you appreciate the situation here, and I don't want to say more than I have said, because we are talking about a specific matter that is before the court. I hear you, I do. I would appreciate any suggestions that the member may have with respect to this particular matter and whether reforms are needed. I will pursue that. You've asked me about a case, and you know I can't speak to it. But I'd appreciate any information you may have on this, so that if it's something that can be taken to the justice ministers' conference in the fall, I will.

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a question to the Minister of Health. Last Friday, I held a press conference with the Sudbury and District Chiropractic Society and three patients. All three make extensive use of chiropractic coverage and none has any private insurance. The Tucker family, for example, paid \$250 last year out of their own pocket to access chiropractic care. With no OHIP coverage, they would now pay \$750 to get the same level of care. Leeann Tucker says there's no way her family can afford that cost, not to mention the new cost the family will be forced to pay with your new health tax.

Minister, chiropractic care is essential for Leeann Tucker, her husband and two children. Will you do the right thing now and reverse your decision to delist chiropractic services?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I've had many opportunities to make the point about the priorities that we've chosen to support in our government's most recent budget. As would be well known to many in Sudbury, but apparently not to the honourable member, Sudbury is a very significant beneficiary of our government's direction. The fact is that as a result of the priorities we've chosen, we're moving forward on significant primary care reform to help a community like Sudbury, 30,000 people from which, as a result of that party while they were in government and that party when they were in government, don't have the benefit of a doctor.

In addition, we are significantly supporting the Northern Ontario Medical School, and I was pleased to announce recently that our government is moving forward with a strong commitment to the Sudbury Regional Hospital to make sure that it's there to provide that vital role for health services for the people of northeastern Ontario.

Ms Martel: The question was about chiropractic care and people in my community who are now going to have to pay out of their own pockets for that. You see, before the election, Minister, your government said you would not cut health care services. Your Premier said you would never bring in a new health tax, and you also said that you would stop two-tier health in Ontario.

After the election, you're the government that's cutting services from OHIP, you're the government that's brought in an unfair, regressive health tax, and you're the government that's reinforcing two-tier health, where, if you have the money you can buy quality care, and if you don't, you just do without.

Minister, cutting chiropractic services will cost the health care system more, because people in pain will end up in the emergency ward. That will cost a whole lot more than a visit to the local chiropractor. Your cuts to health care hurt patients and they're not going to save a dime. Why don't you do the right thing now and reverse your decision: Continue to cover chiropractic care through OHIP?

Hon Mr Smitherman: I'm pleased to acknowledge that there were tough decisions associated with this. The decisions we've been able to make do give us the chance in this province to transform the health care system by driving resources to the community level where they haven't been seen in quite some time. Northerners will be the beneficiaries of a strategy that enhances, as an example, our capacity to deliver long-term care.

The fact of the matter remains that the budget contained choices, and it reflected clear priorities on our part. As a result of the initiatives we've taken, the people of Sudbury will have the benefit of dramatically expanded health care services in a wide variety of ways, as has been outlined by our government. While I recognize that these choices are difficult, we very much stand behind them.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr Kim Craitor (Niagara Falls): My question today is for the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal. Since my election to the Legislature last October, I've been inundated by people in my riding of Niagara Falls who are on a waiting list for an excessive period of time for affordable housing. In fact, people who are considered as homeless have had to wait for up to a year before housing becomes available, and others who are on the list sometimes wait for two to three years. This situation has caused a severe problem in my riding, but also throughout the Niagara region and probably across Ontario. Minister Caplan, what is our government doing to ensure that affordable housing is available to Ontarians who need it?

Hon David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): I want to thank the member for the opportunity to inform the House about our government's commitment to delivering real, positive change when it comes to affordable housing. I'm pleased that our budget contained \$85 million to build affordable housing. This

commitment signals a significant increase in funding, which will actually get spent to build affordable housing. The previous government spent some \$6.3 million on affordable housing last year, yet they budgeted \$121.6 million mainly federal dollars in the fictitious Magna budget.

We're going to turn that around, and we already have. I am very proud that since we took office, we have unlocked millions of those dollars. To date, 2,389 units for 41 projects across 13 communities in Ontario have been announced, resulting in a total commitment of \$56 million. Through our investments in affordable housing, our government is committed to supporting stronger communities in Ontario.

Mr Craitor: Minister, these plans are necessary to eliminate the unacceptable waiting lists for people in Niagara and across Ontario who need affordable housing. How do you plan on meeting the government's commitment to provide 20,000 new units of affordable housing?

Hon Mr Caplan: The Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal is developing a comprehensive, new affordable housing strategy that will meet the challenge head-on. We are undertaking and have engaged extensively with stakeholders across this province. We are redesigning the affordable housing project. We are improving the tendering and project selection process. We are creating an innovative merit-based application process. We also intend to match the federal contribution over the life of our government to create more housing in those areas of need, and we will do so in a fiscally responsible manner.

In the meantime, we have extended the existing pilot project. We will continue to take applications from both high-needs areas and from other communities that have expressed an interest so that we can build on the momentum we have already created. I'm pleased to say that we will have some very exciting announcements of innovative new projects in the days, weeks and months ahead.

ABATTOIRS

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): My question is to the Minister of Agriculture and Food. Minister, last Wednesday you finally made the announcement that \$7 million from the mature animal abattoir fund would go to four abattoirs in the province. Front-line farmers still reeling from the effects of the closed border went without funding so you could invest in the slaughter capacity for the surplus mature animal. At the time, at least one of the four abattoirs awarded the funding was licensed to slaughter animals for export and thus could not process mature animals. Minister, were you aware at the time of the announcement that the money you awarded was going to a facility that didn't qualify, or did your staff just keep you in the dark about that fact?

Hon Steve Peters (Minister of Agriculture and Food): I find it very interesting coming from a member who is quoted on March 5 of this year in the Tillsonburg News that if we had enough capacity, the border being

closed to the US market wouldn't be such a hardship. This process we developed was developed in consultation with the farmers in Ontario: the Ontario Cattlemen's Association, the Dairy Farmers of Ontario, along with many others. What we wanted to do was to try to increase capacity.

1500

We have a backlog of 60,000 animals in the province. We had a competitive process; 33 bids were reviewed by ministry staff. We're very aware of the situation that exists with one of the abattoirs and that they're going to be making an investment to create a dedicated line to deal with culled animals.

I think you should be standing up and supporting this, because this is an initiative that is genuinely going to help farmers. This is a long-term, good news initiative for farmers.

Mr Hardeman: From what I understand, your ministry knew this facility could not slaughter mature animals and continue to export beef. As a matter of fact, when I spoke to a representative of the abattoir after the announcement, the facility didn't even want the contract because they could lose the licence they presently have to ship their slaughtered animals for export. Yet your news release said you had signed agreements with four abattoirs valued at just under \$5 million. Surely you wouldn't give taxpayers' money to a facility not qualified to fulfill the contract.

So, Minister, did you give a bogus award to an unqualified facility, or was it a partisan decision that needs to have detailed specs to truly qualify?

Hon Mr Peters: I think it's very important—and this government recognizes, and I would hope the honourable member would, as the former Minister of Agriculture—that we need to do everything we can to help the agricultural industry in this province. We need to make investments in agriculture—something you refused to do.

We could have just followed through with the federal cow cull program, provided our 40% share and put some dollars into a farmer's pocket that would have quickly flowed through that farmer's pocket. But in consultation with the industry, the decision was made that we need to find long-term solutions. We have made investments in four facilities right now. We have approximately \$2 million left to make further investments in facilities. As well, we've allocated \$3 million to the Ontario Cattlemen's Association to help create new markets for this product.

I think the member should recognize as well that of that \$7 million that has been allocated to create new capacity, 25% is repayable. Those are dollars that are going to be coming back and reinvested to support further marketing in this province.

WALKERTON TRAGEDY

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): A question to the Acting Premier: You're paying a company \$11 million to administer compensation claims for the

people of Walkerton. This company is scraping huge fees off the top while less than half the compensation claims—less than half—have been settled four years after the tragedy.

John Al, whose wife died, said this: "It annoys the hell out of me. While people who lost loved ones have to beg for compensation, they are divvying up all this money. They got theirs but no one cares what happens to us." Mr Al still has not been compensated.

Acting Premier, why are you paying this company so much when the people of Walkerton are still suffering?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): To the Attorney General.

Hon Michael Bryant (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): I say to the member, as she knows, the compensation plan is a court-approved plan whereby the people of Walkerton said they did not want government administering the plan; they wanted the court to supervise and administer the plan. That was their choice. That was not our choice. They wanted government to be at arm's length. In March 2001, then-Chief Justice LeSage approved the settlement, calling it fair, reasonable and in the best interests of the class. It is something the people of Walkerton want administered by the court. If there is information we should be bringing to the court's attention, of course the government will do that.

In this case, I think the court's fully aware of what you're talking about and the amounts we're talking about. I know the court has powers of audit and otherwise to revisit that. So it is in the hands of the court, and it's not just what it said in the court order; that's what the people of Walkerton wanted, and we respect that wish.

Ms Churley: Minister, that is a shocking response. Your Premier said back in February, when this issue was raised, that he would try to fix it then. Your Premier went to Walkerton about eight months ago and tearfully told the people of Walkerton that he would do everything he could to help them.

Your Premier and your government are quick to take credit for what you perceive as good action, but you don't take responsibility for your failures, and this is a failure. You've been in government for eight months and these people are still suffering.

This company is being paid \$8 million to administer costs alone, and people are still waiting to get their compensation. I'm going to ask you again. You are the government. You are responsible to these people. Do something about it. No more excuses.

Hon Mr Bryant: The member is raising a couple of issues. One is the recent disclosure of information around costs involving the adjuster. The other issue was one where, yes, indeed, the Premier and the Minister of the Environment heard concerns from the people of Walkerton. We listened to those concerns, and we brought the people's concerns to the court.

The court made an order on February 27th of this year, and released supplementary directions to that order. I

won't have time in my answer to go through what Justice Winkler ordered, but that was a circumstance where we received information from the people, we brought it to the court's attention, and then the court exercised its discretion and acted. In this particular case, if the member has any information that she believes we should be bringing to the court's attention, I would encourage her to send it over our way. We will bring it to the court's attention. They have responsibility for administering it. That's what the people of Walkerton wanted, and we respect that. We will continue to listen to the people of Walkerton and bring their concerns to the court where appropriate.

SARS

Ms Laurel C. Broten (Etobicoke-Lakeshore): My question is for the Minister of Health. Minister, I don't have to tell you that last year SARS hit Toronto very hard. Since then, there have been reports from the Ontario expert panel on SARS and infectious disease control and Commissioner Archie Campbell on the investigation into the outbreak.

Residents of Toronto need to know that our government is taking action on this important public health issue. I know you came out with a plan yesterday, and I'm wondering whether you can inform this House how this plan will move our province forward on the fight against SARS, amongst other public health crises.

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I did have the privilege yesterday of participating in the launch of Operation Health Protection. This was a comprehensive response to the work of Dr David Naylor, Dr David Walker and also the good work of Justice Archie Campbell, who have given our province an extraordinary advantage based on their quality of work.

What we moved forward yesterday, with respect, were significant enhancements on our public health. Renewal of the public health system is at the heart of it. The Ontario Health Protection and Promotion Agency will be launched and built by 2006-07. We're expanding the capacities of the ministry's health and emergency management unit and creating a provincial infectious disease advisory committee.

Because I think it's incredibly important to say so, the Ontario Public Health Association, which is the organization that represents public health officials in the province of Ontario, had the following quote to offer: "This plan shows the commitment of the government to strengthen Ontario's public health system and the understanding that public health is a crucial service in need of support."

Ms Broten: I'm sure that the people of Ontario find comfort in the fact that we are taking action to protect the public from threats to our health. One common thread and theme that was reported during last year's SARS crisis was the perceived lack of independence from the chief medical officer of health during that crisis. How will Operation Health Protection improve this situation?

Hon Mr Smitherman: I think one of the critical elements that people were concerned about during our challenges with SARS was the idea that Ontario's chief public health officer had the capacity to speak freely. The fact is that, as a result of the direction that we were provided in the interim report by Justice Campbell, we've moved forward with an approach which follows exactly, to the T, the recommendation that we've been given by Justice Archie Campbell.

I think responding to the direction given by Justice Archie Campbell, an esteemed judge who has been asked to provide advice to the government, is entirely appropriate. What that means is that we will institute legislative changes to dramatically increase the independence of the chief medical officer of health, to give the Legislature the opportunity to be playing a role in helping to nominate future chief medical officers of health, and to make sure that the chief medical officer of health in this province enjoys the legislative protection and power to be able to offer up all of the necessary information to Ontarians on the state of public health and to highlight any risks that the chief medical officer of health feels are necessary.

One last point: The chief medical officer of health will be presenting an annual report to the Legislature of Ontario on the state of public health in the province of Ontario.

1510

MUNICIPAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): My question today is for the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal. You'll know that on Easter weekend, the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services announced the closure of the Pembroke jail. Since that time we've been trying to get answers from the minister. We have had many communications with him and we're hoping that we're going to get some answers in that regard fairly soon.

Since that closure, the conditions that these prisoners are being held in while they're awaiting bail hearings or trial are quite deplorable. I want to get that in there because it goes to my next point, which is that there is another issue in Pembroke, and that is the courthouse renovations. They've been renovating the government services building to accommodate temporary courthouses so that the permanent work on the courthouse can proceed—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): The question is?

Mr Yakabuski: —and nothing has happened for weeks. It's at a standstill. What I'm asking the minister is this: Has there been a stop-work order issued? If so, when will it be lifted, when will that work begin again, and why does your government place a lower priority on justice—

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): I want to thank the member for the question. I

think it highlights a significant problem that we have in this province. Because of the actions of the previous government, quite frankly, you have left us with an enormous infrastructure deficit. It is going to take us considerable time to dig ourselves out of the hole that your government has left us in, whether it's in the justice sector, in the transportation sector, in health care, in colleges and universities or in public secondary education.

It is, as the finance minister indicated in the budget, our intention to put together, for the first time ever, a 10-year capital infrastructure plan for Ontario. We are working not only with our ministry partners but with all regions across this province to make sure we are meeting the legitimate needs of Ontarians to be able to improve the public services through the infrastructure investments that we're making. I know that I'll be able to count on this member's support in developing that plan going forward.

The Speaker: New question?

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): No, supplementary.

The freeze in the infrastructure seems to hit all ministries. In my riding, the province has already invested \$12 million in the building of a new hospital, and now the hospital board is waiting to get the green light from you to send the project to tender. They have stated publicly that they feel the facility may have fallen off the minister's radar screen and are concerned that they may not have final approval in place to have shovels in the ground this year. I've asked your colleague Minister Smitherman about this and have had no answer.

I ask you, Minister, can the Woodstock General Hospital board expect to hear from this government soon on the approval to go to tender, or should they consider themselves part of the infrastructure freeze?

Hon Mr Caplan: The member opposite is sadly misinformed; in fact, there is no freeze on capital. The budget we introduced on May 18 saw a 17% increase in capital and infrastructure spending in the province, one of the most significant increases in our budget. It is a very good news item, although I must admit that the magnitude of the deficit, as far as infrastructure and capital left by your government, is astounding. It is going to take some significant work on behalf of this minister and on behalf of this government.

It is fully our intention to bring innovative tools like the Canada-Ontario municipal rural infrastructure fund, like the Ontario Strategic Infrastructure Financing Authority and innovative infrastructure renewal bonds. We have some truly creative and innovative ways that we are bringing forward to meet some of the challenges that, unfortunately, that member, when he was in government, didn't have the ability or the wherewithal to make happen. Thank God, we have a new government in Ontario today.

LABOUR DISPUTE

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I have a question to the Minister of Children and Youth Service. Minister, 145 youth workers at the Syl Apps Youth Centre

have been out on a picket line since April 15. Syl Apps, as you know, is in Oakville. It's an 80-bed government-funded secure-custody detention and treatment facility that houses severely disturbed adolescents whose crimes include the most heinous, murder among them.

Their employer, Kinark, has shown no interest in bringing this labour dispute to an end. From the outset, Kinark has shown contempt for the bargaining process and, in fact, has refused to bargain.

This program is still being fully funded by your government even though they're down to 40 inmates. What are you going to do to get Kinark to the bargaining table so this labour dispute can end?

Hon Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): I thank the honourable member for his question. I'm extremely concerned about the situation there. As you know, I can't get involved in the negotiations between the employer and the union. I can say that my ministry is monitoring the situation, however, because the safety of the youth and the adults there is very important to us. We hope they come to the table very soon.

Mr Kormos: To the minister: The community of Oakville has become a far less secure place, because as you know scabs are doing the work of these trained professional youth workers. The employer has shown no interest in bargaining in good faith. The employer offers zero increase and demands concessions, even though it just gave its executive director a \$37,600-a-year salary increase. The lives of children in the community are at risk. You are funding this program, all 80 beds of it, even though 40 are all that are being occupied. Surely you can express your concerns and the concerns of the community to Kinark around the risk that community is being exposed to, and call upon them to start bargaining at the bargaining table.

Hon Mrs Bountrogianni: I'm extremely concerned about the youth and the adults in that facility. I have to say that the child advocate has also committed to visiting the facility on a regular basis. The only thing I will say about that situation is that whatever monies are saved now, as a result of this disruption, will be applied to the new contract.

SERVICES FOR THE DISABLED

Mr Shafiq Qaadri (Etobicoke North): It's a question addressed to the Honourable Sandra Pupatello, the Minister of Community and Social Services. Today your ministry delivered on a significant budget commitment to help up to 1,000 more Ontarians with disabilities. How? By helping them to pay for home and vehicle modifications that let them live safer and more independent lives. This is great news, an encouraging initiative for the many families with children, because this is the first time the program will be extended to include children with disabilities, another sign of the betterment of Ontario under a McGuinty government. Can you please tell the House

what else your announcement today means for Ontario's families?

Hon Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues): I appreciate the question very much. Minister Bountrogianni and I were very happy to make an announcement today that added \$10 million to the home and vehicle modification program. The wonderful news about this program is that, as this member rightly mentions, we have expanded access to the program. It was a program that was launched in 1999, and at that time was used exclusively by adults. For example, you needed to be the owner of the car in order to benefit from a sales tax rebate. That's what it was. We've now rolled this into a home and vehicle modification program to have much better access for parents, for children and for adults.

Mr Qaadri: My constituents in Etobicoke North and the people of Ontario appreciate your considered reply and your efforts to create a more just society. Previous to the May 18 budget announcement, the Ministry of Finance provided families with a rebate of retail sales tax paid on motor vehicles to transport persons with permanent physical disabilities. Has this program changed in today's announcements, and what will that actually mean for Ontario's families?

Hon Ms Pupatello: The program that was used for vehicles was a rebate program. That program has been rolled into this home and vehicle modification program, and then we've enhanced the funding for the program. So over \$7 million that used to be prescribed through this tax rebate has been rolled in, along with \$3 million more to the existing program that was \$2.62 million. So it is a significantly larger program.

We are using the Ontario March of Dimes, which has done a tremendous job for us, to deliver this program across the province. It is a much broader program. We're very happy to see that.

The parents we brought to Queen's Park today brought their son Tyler, and we were able to show Tyler a van that had been modified so he could roll his wheelchair right into the van. We're very pleased to see that it is an across-Ontario program now, and we encourage people to call the Ontario March of Dimes to see if they in fact can be helped by this.

1520

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): A question to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing: Minister, in the next couple of days you're asking members of the assembly to vote on Bill 27, the greenbelt legislation. As you know full well, especially if you were there at the public hearings in St Catharines a couple of weeks ago, the farmers in the affected area are angry about their loss in equity, they're worried about encumbrances on their ability to do business and they're concerned about restrictions on value-added operations. Ray Duc, chair of the Grape Growers of Ontario, said, "An injection of

support will be required from the provincial and federal government.”

Before this bill is called for a final vote, can the minister guarantee to the House today that there will be appropriate compensation—directly, for infrastructure, for marketing—for farmers in the affected area?

Hon John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors): I'd like to thank the member for the question because today we're starting the debate on third reading of the proposed Greenbelt Protection Act, which is a very positive act for the people of Ontario. What we can definitely guarantee to the people of Ontario is that they're going to get the best greenbelt protection that we, the people of Ontario, want: to make sure that farmland is going to be protected; to make sure that environmentally sensitive land is going to be protected; and to make sure that that part of Ontario made up of the Niagara Escarpment, the Oak Ridges moraine and the greenbelt that connects them is going to be safe and protected for generations to come.

Mr Hudak: Minister, you've been using the same lines the past nine months. Farmers in the affected area are tired of these platitudes. They want answers. They want detailed answers. Minister, you set the tone. You call the shots. You can direct the funding. So today, let's set that tone. Can you guarantee for the House today, before you call this bill for a vote, that you'll put aside funds, put aside the dollars, to make sure that there's compensation appropriate for farmers in the affected area, whether for infrastructure, whether for marketing, whether directly? Set the tone. Show some leadership. Show you care. Will you make that guarantee right here and right now?

Hon Mr Gerretsen: This government is showing leadership in greenbelt protection, and complete confidence as well in making sure that this greenbelt protection gets passed. It's interesting to note that, from a Hansard that appeared not so long ago, one of his own members stated—and listen to this—“because we had an incapable, incompetent minister handling it in Minister Hudak. He shouldn't have been the minister. He was the minister, and that's unfortunate.” We are trying to correct the errors that were made by that government, by making sure that the people of Ontario have the best greenbelt protection possible for future generations to come.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): A question to the Minister of Education.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order. I'd just like to recognize, after he has waited so patiently, the member from Trinity-Spadina. We can start the clock now.

Mr Marchese: The question is to the Minister of Education. Tonight the Toronto board of education meets to consider an exclusive, \$6-million, five-year contract with Pepsi-Cola at its secondary schools. Despite its reserv-

ations about selling what amounts to liquid candy in our schools, the board feels it has no choice but to approve the contract because of your government's refusal to provide adequate financial resources to our schools.

Day after day, members of your government stand up in this House to talk about the social determinants of health. Here's something very concrete that you can do about the social determinants of health. You can get on the phone, call the Toronto District School Board and commit to them the \$5.8 million they need to say no to this terrible contract. Gerard, are you going to do that?

Hon Gerard Kennedy (Minister of Education): I hate to say to the member opposite, we have all watched and strained with him to get this question up here today, and we wanted it to be about something that mattered in the public interest.

In fact, the companies that are dealing with the school board today are not putting junk food in schools. They're abiding by the ban we put in place, finally, to protect kids in this province. There will be no junk food put in any elementary schools.

As for the school board and its financial condition, this is the selfsame board that declared an \$8-million surplus this year for the first time in six, seven or eight years, including many under the previous NDP government's jurisdiction.

The students in Toronto, for the first time in a number of years, can look forward to a stronger future, can look forward to a future with a board back in charge of its affairs but, more importantly, with funding for those affairs so they get the same chance at an education as every other student in the province.

PETITIONS

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): I have a petition that reads as follows:

“To: Legislative Assembly of Ontario

“Re: Support for chiropractic services in Ontario health insurance plan

“Whereas elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need;

“Those with reduced ability to pay—including seniors, low-income families and the working poor—will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments;

“Elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

“There was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the

May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province.”

It is signed by some 200 people. I am in agreement and affix my signature thereto.

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Mr Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe): “Whereas the parents and residents of Summerside Community Association in London, Ontario, are concerned, due to the number of children attending schools outside the Summerside subdivision; and

“Whereas the number of children projected to be residing in the Summerside community is approximately 1,400 children under the age of 19 by 2009 (as backed by Census 2001), therefore request the support of building a public elementary school, a separate elementary school and a high school;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature as follows:

“To build a public elementary school on the proposed public school site fronting on Meadowgate Boulevard ... city of London;

“To build a separate elementary school on the proposed Catholic school site fronting Chelton Road...;

“To build a high school on the proposed high school site on the north side of future Evans Boulevard between future Meadowgate Boulevard and Jackson Road....”

I support this petition and affix my name to it.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr Phil McNeely (Ottawa-Orléans): “Whereas property reassessment occurs now on an annual basis; and

“Whereas higher housing markets increase assessment, leading to higher property taxes; and

“Whereas property values are not related to the cost of municipal services, nor to the ability of taxpayers to pay; and

“Whereas the assessment system is a provincial responsibility;

“Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to initiate a review of Ontario’s property assessment system that would lead to reforms that will protect homeowners from excess increases in assessments due to hot housing markets.”

1530

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Ms Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): “To Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Re support for chiropractic services in Ontario health insurance plan:

“Whereas elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need;

“Those with reduced ability to pay—including seniors, low-income families and the working poor—will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments;

“Elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

“There was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province.”

I agree with this petition and affix my signature thereon.

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I have a petition here.

“To: Legislative Assembly of Ontario

“Re: support for chiropractic services in Ontario health insurance plan:

“Whereas elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need;

“Those with reduced ability to pay—including seniors, low-income families and the working poor—will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments;

“Elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

“There was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province.”

It has thousands of signatures. I add mine to the list, as I totally agree with it.

OPTOMETRISTS

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): “Whereas the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario will be considering a private member’s bill that aims to amend the Optometry Act to give optometrists the authority to prescribe therapeutic pharmaceutical agents for the treatment of certain eye diseases; and

“Whereas optometrists are highly trained and equipped with the knowledge and specialized instru-

mentation needed to effectively diagnose and treat certain eye problems; and

"Whereas extending the authority to prescribe TPAs to optometrists will help relieve the demands on ophthalmologists and physicians who currently have the exclusive domain for prescribing TPAs to optometry patients; and

"Whereas the bill introduced by New Democrat Peter Kormos (MPP—Niagara Centre) will ensure that patients receive prompt, timely, one-stop care where appropriate;

"Therefore, I do support the bill proposing an amendment to the Optometry Act to give optometrists the authority to prescribe therapeutic pharmaceutical agents for the treatment of certain eye diseases and I urge the government of Ontario to ensure speedy passage of the bill."

I support the petition.

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Mr Kim Craitor (Niagara Falls): I've been asked by constituents in my Niagara Falls riding to submit the following petition:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced" on May 18 "and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system..."

I'm pleased to submit this petition on their behalf.

WATER QUALITY

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): My petition concerns water testing in a rural community.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the riding of Simcoe North is made up of many small communities; and

"Whereas not all citizens live in large cities such as Toronto, where access to municipal water service is taken for granted; and

"Whereas smaller communities have little, if any, access to municipal water services; and

"Whereas Ontario's smaller villages and hamlets are home to many community buildings such as churches, community halls and arenas; and

"Whereas those responsible for halls, churches, arenas and other community facilities take pride in ensuring these buildings have access to the highest quality potable water;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"That the implementation of regulation 170/03 as it relates to community halls and similar facilities be delayed; and

"That the province of Ontario ensure that the halls, churches, arenas and other public facilities on private wells comply with water standards that are reasonable and appropriate."

I'm very pleased to sign my name on behalf of these 300 names.

OHIP OFFICE

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): "Whereas more than 800,000 people live in the downtown core; and

"Whereas the only OHIP offices in the entire GTA that service non-homeless clients are at 47 Sheppard Avenue East, 4400 Dufferin Street, 2063 Lawrence Avenue East, or 3300 Bloor Street West; and

"Whereas OHIP is an essential service to all the people of this province; and

"Whereas taking more than one day off work to stand in long lineups at OHIP offices located in distant parts of the city is detrimental to a worker's productivity and the economy as a whole;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately locate a suitable building for an OHIP office in the downtown core and have the office ready to receive clients by the end of 2004."

I support the petition.

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Mr Shafiq Qaadri (Etobicoke North): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need; and

"Those with reduced ability to pay—including seniors, low-income families and the working poor—will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments;

"Elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

"There was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province."

I am pleased to present this to the page Samuel, who will deliver it to you immediately.

Mr John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): This petition has been signed by literally thousands of people in my riding and, I presume, millions across the province of Ontario. It's unbelievable how many people were upset about and will continue to be upset about this decision.

"To: Legislative Assembly of Ontario

"Re: support for chiropractic services in Ontario health insurance plan

"Whereas elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic services "will no longer be able to access the health care they need;

"Those with reduced ability to pay—including seniors, low-income families and the working poor—will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments;

"Elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to the "government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

"There was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province."

I agree with this petition and I sign my name to it.

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads as follows:

"Whereas elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need;

"Those with reduced ability to pay—including seniors, low-income families and the working poor—will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments;

"Elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to the government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

"There was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province."

This is signed by 1,757 residents from the greater city of Sudbury. It was sent to me by a chiropractic assistant. I agree, of course, with the petitioners and I affix my signature to it.

GO TRANSIT SERVICE

Mr Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly from a group of social services workers in Mississauga, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the city of Mississauga has, within a generation, grown from a linked collection of suburban and farming communities into Canada's sixth-largest city,

and tens of thousands of people daily need to commute into and out of Mississauga in order to do business, educate themselves and their families and enjoy culture and recreation; and

"Whereas gridlock on all roads leading into and out of Mississauga makes peak-period road commuting impractical and commuter rail service on the Milton GO line is restricted to morning and afternoon service into and out of Toronto; and

"Whereas residents of western Mississauga need to 'commute to commute,' driving along traffic-clogged roads to get to overflowing parking lots at the Meadowvale, Streetsville and Erindale GO train stations;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario, through the Ministry of Transportation and highways, instruct GO Transit to allocate sufficient resources from its 2004-05 capital budget to proceed immediately with the acquisition of land and construction of a new GO train station, called Lisgar, at Tenth Line and the rail tracks, to alleviate the parking congestion, and provide better access to GO train service on the Milton line for residents of western Mississauga."

As one of those residents, I am pleased to affix my signature and to have Logan carry it down for me.

1540

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Mr Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe): I've been asked by my constituents in London-Fanshawe to read this petition:

"Whereas elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need;

"Those with reduced ability to pay—including seniors, low-income families and the working poor—will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments;

"Elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

"There was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services...."

Therefore, I submit this petition on behalf of my constituents of London-Fanshawe.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I believe I have unanimous consent to move a motion to be decided without debate or amendment respecting this afternoon's debate on the motion for third reading of Bill 27.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Do we have unanimous consent? Agreed.

Hon Mr Duncan: I move that debate on the motion for third reading of Bill 27, An Act to establish a greenbelt study area and to amend the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act, 2001, be apportioned equally among the recognized parties and that, at 5:55 pm, the Speaker shall put the question on the motion without further debate or amendment.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): Just on that point, I thought we had decided that we would defer the vote—

Interjection.

Ms Churley: OK, I misunderstood.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr Duncan has moved that debate on the motion for third reading of Bill 27, An Act to establish a greenbelt study area and to amend the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act, 2001, be apportioned equally among the recognized parties and that, at 5:55 pm, the Speaker shall put the question on the motion without further debate or amendment. Agreed? Agreed.

GREENBELT PROTECTION ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 SUR LA PROTECTION DE LA CEINTURE DE VERDURE

Mr Gerretsen moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 27, An Act to establish a greenbelt study area and to amend the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act, 2001 / *Projet de loi 27; Loi établissant une zone d'étude de la ceinture de verdure et modifiant la Loi de 2001 sur la conservation de la moraine d'Oak Ridges.*

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Mr Gerretsen?

Hon John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors): I am very pleased today to commence, and I guess finalize today as well, the third reading of this very significant bill. Perhaps to give the people who may be watching, and certainly those of us here today, a better understanding as to what this is all about, I will commence by reading the preamble of the bill, which I think sets out the purpose of the act and what the government is trying to accomplish here. It states:

"The government of Ontario recognizes that in order to protect environmentally sensitive land and farmland and contain urban sprawl, there is an immediate need to study an area in the part of Ontario known as the Golden Horseshoe.

"The government recognizes that clear limits must be set on development in order to protect this valuable resource as a greenbelt for the long term.

"The government recognizes that good planning for environmental and agricultural protection and sustainable development will result in economic benefits to the residents of the Golden Horseshoe area.

"The government recognizes the environmental and agricultural significance of this area and its importance as

a source of food, water, natural heritage systems, green space and recreation, resulting in an enhanced quality of life.

"The government recognizes that it is important to continue to protect the Niagara Escarpment and the Oak Ridges moraine and to protect a broader greenbelt area."

Therefore, the government wishes to enact a bill that we know as Bill 27, An Act to establish a greenbelt study area and to amend the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act, 2001.

Speaker, in the 40 minutes or so that we have left, I will be sharing my time with my parliamentary assistant, Maria Van Bommel, the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, who has shepherded this bill through committee and who has attended the various public meetings that have been held by the legislative committee and some of the public meetings that we've held on the greenbelt as well.

By containing sprawl, encouraging growth management and creating a permanent greenbelt, our government will enhance our quality of life. The lands on the outer ridge of the developed areas of the Golden Horseshoe are the most threatened in Ontario today. This proposed Greenbelt Protection Act, 2004, is a significant step in the right direction and is real, positive change. This act would provide for a time out for the discussion of important issues and factors that must be taken into account when proposing greenbelt protection.

Some of the most pressing issues concern agriculture in the Golden Horseshoe. We need to ensure that truly key rural and agricultural lands are protected. We need the help of our farmers, because, after all, when farmers are supported and farm operations remain viable, farmland is protected. That's what Ontarians want and it is what farmers have always wanted. But once farmland is lost to urban development, it is gone for good.

The proposed Greenbelt Protection Act has achieved so much in so little time. Why is that? It is the way this government does business. It's because this government talks, discusses, consults, listens and acts. Ontarians are smart and they know what's important in their lives. They have much to say and much to contribute in the process of government. We've had the privilege to listen to Ontarians in the course of the legislative processes of the proposed act. The public have come to our standing committee to offer their concerns, ideas and support, and they have gone out to the meetings of the Greenbelt Task Force around the Golden Horseshoe.

I must say that the Greenbelt Task Force, which has been chaired by Mayor Robert MacIsaac of Burlington, with 12 other individuals from a variety of different backgrounds—agriculture, the development industry, housing, the building industry, the aggregate community, planning and the environmental community—have had meetings on almost a weekly basis to develop the criteria that are necessary to actually put this greenbelt protection area in place.

As well, the standing committee on general government sat to discuss this proposed act with Ontarians for

four days in four different localities in the Golden Horseshoe area. The committee heard from a number of stakeholders representing municipalities, the farming community, the environment, the aggregate industry and home builders. The committee continued its work, spending another three days going through clause-by-clause of this bill right here at Queen's Park to ensure that we got it right.

We have heard what the public and our stakeholders had to say and we have proposed amendments to the bill in response to that. Some of these amendments have expanded the definition of urban settlement areas to better reflect the various local circumstances in municipalities around the Golden Horseshoe. Now, for example, urban settlement areas in all official plans will be included. This will eliminate the potential for confusion over what type of official plan is affected. In addition, development in the late stages of approval at the municipal level would be allowed to continue through the normal municipal planning processes. For example, developments with draft approval could proceed to final approval without delay.

1550

Bill 27 will now clear up confusion as to what are considered urban and rural uses of lands. Aggregates, forestry and conservation uses are now clearly identified as rural uses in the proposed bill. These uses will be discussed further as we proceed with planning for an approach to permanent greenbelt protection that will come out of this act.

Responding to the concerns of the environment, we have added additional protection to the Niagara Escarpment in areas slated for greenbelt protection. New urban expansions on the escarpment will be prohibited. In addition, the government will have the power to stay hearings on such matters if necessary.

We heard from members of the opposition parties making motions for changes as well. Members of the official opposition, for example, would have liked landowners to be compensated for loss of profits they may have seen if their land was available for development. Mr Speaker, we cannot compensate people for speculating on what lands might have been developed. Agricultural land will retain its value as agricultural land and can be sold as such and used as such. The opposition should understand that these exact same provisions, such as compensation not being offered to landowners, are included in the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act of 2001, when the opposition party that now complains about the lack of those provisions was in power. They used exactly the same provisions that we have in this act here.

On the other hand, the third party advocated freezing sewer, water and highway infrastructure projects in the moratorium. What has to be understood is that this is a short-term bill. It expires on December 15 of this year, when hopefully the permanent greenbelt protection area will be in place, and it's certainly our aim and plan to make sure that will happen by that date.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Gerretsen: Concerns about major infrastructure projects cannot be dealt with in this extremely limited piece of legislation, as the member of the third party well knows, Speaker. They are, in fact, best dealt with through our other government initiatives, such as the growth management strategy and the GTA transportation strategy, which are currently being worked on by the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal and the Minister of Transportation. Highways and other infrastructure projects, as we all know, are extremely important, but they must be dealt with through other government initiatives that are more appropriate. The growth management and transportation strategy initiatives will ensure that these topics are covered thoroughly, more thoroughly than could be done in an interim piece of legislation about protecting green space.

The third party also advocated extending the greenbelt study area to include Simcoe county, Kitchener-Waterloo and beyond. Simcoe county's concerns, and planning for areas beyond the greenbelt study area, will be dealt with through the growth management strategy, because, were we to grow, how to service that growth is an issue in Simcoe, and we totally realize that. Our ministry staff continues to work with officials in Simcoe to determine how to manage growth and protect the environment.

The proposed Greenbelt Protection Act, 2004, is about fulfilling our promise, as contained in our election material for the last election, to protect green space. In our platform, we said that we will link the Oak Ridges moraine to the Niagara Escarpment and will protect the Niagara tender fruit and grape lands, and we are taking steps to do that with this bill.

As we move forward, however, using the time out this bill affords us, we must gather information about one of the more complex issues facing us, and that is how to protect farmland in the Golden Horseshoe. Permanent greenbelt protection would extend to include the farmland that feeds us. In central Ontario, farmland makes up almost 45% of the area's 9.2 million acres. Some of the best, most productive agricultural lands lie within the Golden Horseshoe. Prime agricultural areas are therefore located where development pressures are the greatest. A myriad of urban uses have consumed some of Ontario's best prime agricultural land, and some members of the official opposition ask that key agricultural lands, where development pressures exist, be exempted from our moratorium. They asked that municipalities, where growth management studies have been initiated, be allowed to take steps to allow development on that land. We are doing the right thing by taking a time out now to study how agricultural lands will be protected for the long run. Ontario's agricultural land is some of the best farmland in North America. We cannot afford to pave it over with asphalt and concrete.

Agriculture creates jobs, generates revenue and benefits the environment. It employs more than 600,000 people, directly or indirectly, in Ontario alone. It removes carbon dioxide from the air and provides linkages that

wildlife species need to survive in urbanizing areas. It provides sources of fresh produce for Ontarians and it helps to buffer natural green space from urban areas.

The issue of food security and the benefits of supplying food to an increasing population should never be underestimated. This point was made by a member of the public at the Greenbelt Task Force meeting in Burlington just this last Wednesday night.

Some of the best agricultural land in the Golden Horseshoe is in the Niagara area. The Niagara area's good tender fruit and good grape lands have long been regarded as a nationally unique agricultural resource. Half of Niagara's land base is farmed. But economic development activities have brought prosperity to the region as well, and these activities have also brought non-farm development and urbanization pressures. This land, and other key agricultural lands in the Golden Horseshoe, simply must be protected.

Only 5% of Canada's total land base is classified as prime agricultural land, and more than 50% of the best soil in Canada is in Ontario. These lands are a finite resource. Once lost through conversion to non-farm uses, they can never be replaced. Long-term viability requires careful management and protection from other land uses.

The province has many options available to protect farmland. The provincial policy statement under the Planning Act outlines the province's policy and gives direction on the protection of agricultural resources of the province, for example. Other existing pieces of legislation contribute to the protection of farmlands and farm uses. The Farming and Food Production Protection Act, 1998, and the Nutrient Management Act are but two, to cite some examples.

But as with much of the legislation designed to protect our environment, these exist in isolation. Farmers understand that examining single issues in isolation is no way to understand the challenges of farming. Farmers have used the voices this government gave them over the course of our discussions on greenbelt protection. They have told us they need something more. They told us at the standing committee meetings and at the meetings of the Greenbelt Task Force that agriculture is suffering. More and more farm operations are losing their viability. The costs of running farm operations are far outpacing revenues. This, as farmers are well aware, is linked not to one single issue, but to a number of issues. They range from BSE, or mad cow disease, to drought, to NAFTA and the World Trade Organization.

Yes, farmers do have concerns about permanent greenbelt protection. We knew that they would. That is why we have two members of our agricultural community, including a representative from the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, sitting on the Greenbelt Task Force. It is why this government, under the leadership of the Minister of Agriculture, Steve Peters, has struck an agricultural advisory team, on the recommendation of the task force. This team will look at these issues and issues of farm viability that affect farmers across the province. As a matter of fact, former federal Minister of Agri-

culture, Lyle Vancilief, and Bob Bedggood, past president of the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario, have agreed to provide the government with advice as the government develops its growth management plan.

The team will comment on issues that affect agriculture, such as the identification of prime agricultural land and land use planning policies. They will also suggest strategies to strengthen agriculture in protected areas. The team will ensure that Ontario's growth management strategy addresses the concerns of agricultural stakeholders and will help to ensure the agricultural community's continued strength.

1600

But agricultural land in the Golden Horseshoe is at a crossroads. It is valuable for the fresh quality food it produces, but farmland has become a valuable commodity in the Golden Horseshoe due to the population growth. People are moving here and, if and when they come, where will they live? If we continue to build and develop as we have for the last decade, they will live on our farmland in sprawl.

The proposed Greenbelt Protection Act will give us the time to develop an approach for protection of the green space and the time to identify prime agricultural land for protection, because protecting hundreds of thousands of acres of environmentally sensitive land and farmland within the Golden Horseshoe will enhance our quality of life. That's real, positive change.

It's with great pleasure that I now turn the floor over, as I mentioned before, to my parliamentary assistant—oh, you're giving me the sign that we'll go in rotation. She will be speaking later on this bill as well, Speaker. Thank you very much for your attention.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, it's whoever stands up.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I thought we had made an agreement that each party would use up its time in terms of people's plans to be here or not. Is your parliamentary assistant here?

The Deputy Speaker: All the member for Toronto-Danforth has to do is sit down. The member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex.

Mrs Maria Van Bommel (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): I am proud to speak today in support of Bill 27, the proposed Greenbelt Protection Act, 2004, as an important piece of legislation. The reason is clear: We know that protecting green space will improve the quality of life for the people who choose to live in the Golden Horseshoe. Protecting green space is one part of protecting the health of the land we live on. The health of this land affects the water we drink, the food we eat and the air we breathe. Protecting green space means a high quality of life. But this protection is only a part of the equation. Quality of life also depends on things like encouraging good development and investing our infrastructure dollars strategically.

We are taking steps, through a number of growth management initiatives, to look at the big picture. Water source protection is a key initiative that will help ensure a

supply of clean water for people in the Golden Horseshoe and across the entire province of Ontario. A GTA transportation strategy will help free the Golden Horseshoe from paralyzing gridlock, and it will free commuters and those who drive for a living from traffic jams that take away time from family and add needlessly to environmental pollution. The waste management plan will help to protect the environment by encouraging practices and setting standards for the diversion of waste from landfills.

This government is working on further defining and protecting natural heritage systems across the province. This includes creating more parks and public open spaces through a number of different ways. Work has begun to support agriculture and agri-food industry that will protect our high quality of food supply and enshrine the wise use of prime agricultural lands in the GTA.

But the initiative that is most complementary to greenbelt protection is this government's growth management plan, now in development. This government understands. We get it. The establishment of a permanently protected greenbelt in the Golden Horseshoe will tell us where we cannot grow, and the growth management plan will tell us where we can grow. We must be ready to grow, because we are expecting another 3.5 million people to be living in the Golden Horseshoe by the year 2031. The way we plan for that growth now is key. It is key to the quality of life in the Golden Horseshoe for us now and for future generations.

We need a time out for discussion. That is why we need the proposed Greenbelt Protection Act, 2004. We need the time out that this legislation provides so that we can provide the proper consultation and discussion needed.

The proposed act would prevent land that is now designated for rural uses from being redesignated to urban uses. Urban uses, without good planning, can mean sprawl. The proposed Greenbelt Protection Act of 2004 would maintain the status quo to give us time to plan properly.

This time out is crucial because lands on the outer edges of the Golden Horseshoe are some of the most threatened in our province today, and we need the time to consider the many elements of growth, particularly in the Golden Horseshoe. These are things that this government has already identified through the many initiatives that I have outlined.

This government's members—my friends and colleagues—are not the only group of dedicated Ontarians that recognizes the complexity of the job we have before us. The Greenbelt Task Force was struck by this government in February to consult with stakeholders and the public on greenbelt protection in the Golden Horseshoe. The task force consulted for over a month in May and June.

Before heading out to talk to the people of this province, however, this task force put their own thoughts and ideas on paper. These dedicated and knowledgeable individuals understand, as the government understands, that many elements of growth in the Golden Horseshoe are interrelated and interdependent.

We understand that there are many issues to discuss. The government is taking steps to address issues where there is more pressing need, but the task force has helped us by bringing issues and items together in the context of protecting green space in the Golden Horseshoe. Their discussion paper has given us and the people of Ontario a head start on what we must think about and what we should discuss.

The Golden Horseshoe task force discussion paper outlines what the task force calls the "layers of the greenbelt." These layers, or broad topics, that the task force has identified as particularly important for consideration made up the framework for that consultation.

While this government will await the task force's final recommendations this summer, I want to take a moment to discuss what the task force calls the "layers of a greenbelt."

The first layer is environmental protection. The task force has discussed approaches to environmental protection that include the identification of a natural heritage system in the Golden Horseshoe, including major natural features and functions, such as the Oak Ridges moraine and the Niagara Escarpment. They also include the consideration of regional features and functions and the identification of public parks, open spaces, waterway links and the connections between those features and functions; and, finally, the identification of sensitive areas and less sensitive areas within the greenbelt.

These considerations would be key to the protection of source water in the Golden Horseshoe. We all know how important clean water is to the quality of life for all Ontarians. For the agricultural community, it is particularly key to their business.

Agricultural protection is the second layer that the task force has discussed and identified. Agricultural protection would include, as they have explained, stopping further urban expansion on tender fruit and grape lands in Niagara and the Holland Marsh; stopping further non-farm-related severances on agricultural land; and developing a criteria for identifying additional viable agricultural areas for permanent protection in a greenbelt.

1610

But viability in agriculture is more than just protection of farmland. This government understands that farmers have serious concerns about maintaining viable farm operations. We also understand that many issues related to farm viability are outside the mandate of the Greenbelt Task Force. Many of these agricultural issues have roots far beyond the boundaries of our jurisdiction. Subsidies and trade regulations are dealt with at national and international levels. But farmers deserve to have these issues addressed, as the task force requested, in a more holistic manner.

Our government has committed to this. As noted by Minister Gerretsen, we have formed an agricultural advisory team to look at those broader issues concerning the farm community, not only in the proposed greenbelt area but also across all of Ontario. It will enjoy the support of our staff of experts at the Ministry of Agri-

culture and Food and my colleague Minister Peters because these issues, and the farmers who live with them every day, deserve respect and understanding.

The task force understands that agriculture needs special attention. They know also that those needs are interrelated with yet another layer of discussion. That layer helps them to get their wares to market. Transportation and infrastructure is the next layer, on which we keenly await the task force's recommendations. The task force suggested principles to consider in their discussion when looking at things like highways and other infrastructure that may be required in the greenbelt. They include special recognition, such as not seeing the greenbelt as a land reserve for future infrastructure needs, and recognizing that the Golden Horseshoe is the fastest-growing region in Canada and infrastructure will be needed to support that growth.

Also included are methods that could be used to minimize the cost of new infrastructure, including looking first at alternatives that maximize the capacity of our existing infrastructure. They also include minimizing social, economic and environmental impacts, respecting natural features, preserving open space, seeking creative approaches to design, and controlling growth through planning tools.

While we await the task force's recommendations, we will be working closely with the Ministry of Transportation and the Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal in determining an approach to the greenbelt in those areas. Current initiatives on transportation in the GTA and growth management will figure prominently in any proposed approach.

Away from the gridlock, in rural areas in the Golden Horseshoe, we have some different choices to make. The task force understands that some of the building blocks of our cities' construction industry and aggregates are located within the Golden Horseshoe. Over the course of the consultation, they asked that resource extraction be considered, provided it is done with due care and attention. Proposed approaches include the identification of high potential aggregate areas and their protection from incompatible land use, and a more rigorous approach to rehabilitation of depleted sites to uses that would support or enhance the objectives of greenbelt protection.

They added that aggregate extraction licensing procedures should reflect those approaches. We heard that during the presentations to the standing committee. The task force recognizes that rehabilitation of such sites can render some of them compatible with the objectives of the greenbelt. Some examples in existence today include a restored pit now used for grape growing and another that is now a healthy wetlands area. These are the types of places where people want to be.

The task force understands that Ontarians' enjoyment of the greenbelt is another key to its success. The task force has also discussed culture, recreation and tourism opportunities in the greenbelt area, but they understand that they must be compatible with other greenbelt objectives and priorities. These include things such as the recognition and promotion of cultural sites, districts and

landscapes that are important to community identity, history and character; a network of protected open spaces, such as provincial and municipal parks and conservation areas, which people can enjoy; a system of trails on public and private lands, where expressly permitted by the landowners; and tourism destinations that support and depend on farms, natural areas and rural communities.

The layers identified by the task force show us the many issues that must be considered in determining the scope, content and implementation of the greenbelt. So we eagerly await the task force's final recommendations.

Once these layers have been defined more clearly, we will need to decide on how to implement and administer the greenbelt. This approach will be no small feat. It will need to take into account the provincial plans that already exist in the area; namely, the parkway belt west plan, the Oak Ridges moraine conservation plan and the Niagara Escarpment plan.

It is clear that a permanent greenbelt is a complex task, and this is one of a number of tasks that must be completed to achieve our growth management strategy—a strategy that will maintain and enhance the quality of life in the Golden Horseshoe. The government understands this, the task force understands this and the proposed Greenbelt Protection Act, 2004, is what this government's plan for growth in the Golden Horseshoe needs to be effective.

Our proposed act will give us the time to develop a clear and comprehensive plan for permanent greenbelt protection. It will give us the time to discuss the recommendations of the task force, which they will be delivering to us in July. Given the complex layers to consider, the need for time is obvious. It will give us the time to determine where the most environmentally sensitive areas are. It will give us the time to determine where our most productive and viable agricultural lands lie. Then we will know where we can grow.

Once green space is lost to development and sprawl, we cannot get it back. Ontarians want strong communities and a stronger economy. Our goal is to determine where growth makes sense and what we need to do to protect and ensure a quality of life that is second to none. The proposed Greenbelt Protection Act, 2004, is the first step this government is taking to achieve that goal—and that's real, positive change.

I want to add my thanks to those of the minister to the members of the Greenbelt Task Force and to all those who have worked and participated in the greenbelt consultations. This not only reflects our government's commitment to public input; it adds priceless value to the decision-making process of this assembly.

I am proud to be part of a government that understands the importance of protecting a greenbelt and green space for Ontarians, because it improves the quality of life for all of us, and a high quality of life is what we were elected to deliver.

1620

After eight long years of increasing sprawl under the Tories, we are taking decisive steps toward making real,

positive change by introducing legislation that is the first step to permanent greenbelt protection. By containing sprawl and encouraging growth management, we will protect our environment and enhance our quality of life. Permanent greenbelt protection is one of the ways we can manage growth responsibly. Managing growth is critical to guiding important and positive development in Ontario. We have the opportunity with the proposed greenbelt legislation to do just that.

The lands on the outer edge of the Golden Horseshoe's developed areas are the most threatened, as I said earlier. Current population growth trends in the Golden Horseshoe point to strong, consistent growth. This trend is expected to continue into the future, from 7.5 million people in 2001 to an expected growth to 11 million people by 2031.

Ontario is a place where people want to be, and we welcome growth, but population and economic growth must be planned and managed responsibly. Growth provides more choice about where to live and where to work. It also generates investment, income, tax revenue for municipalities, innovation and higher property values. Poorly planned development, however, can result in increased air and water pollution and the loss of green space and agricultural land. Poorly planned development can encourage over-reliance on the private automobile, traffic congestion and inefficient infrastructure investment. It can also encourage sacrificing important agricultural land and Ontario's food supply.

The government must guide the future development of the Golden Horseshoe to ensure it stays a healthy and prosperous region, with growth that is managed wisely. We will not ignore this challenge. Our government is taking the critical steps to manage that growth and development in a responsible manner. It would be irresponsible for our government not to give careful consideration to the potential effects of sprawl without ensuring a plan is in place for carefully managed growth. But there are many factors that need to be examined. These factors are all interrelated and will require careful consideration before we can propose an approach to permanent greenbelt protection in the Golden Horseshoe.

When discussing greenbelt protection, we must talk about permanent environmental protection. Ontarians understand, and we understand, that a clean environment and a strong economy go hand in hand. Together they mean a high quality of life for all Ontarians. We must talk about the protection and sustainability of agricultural lands. Protecting particularly sensitive areas, such as the Niagara tender fruit and grape lands, and making them viable over the long term, must be an important consideration. Many of us have specific interests in the protection of culture, tourism and recreation opportunities in the region. These things must also be discussed. And last, but certainly not least, providing for infrastructure, transportation and the future resource needs of the region must be examined.

The greenbelt study area is a foundation for both our provincial and national economies. Our economy is vital

not only to Ontarians, but to Canada as a whole. We must be able to move through the Golden Horseshoe to ensure our economy stays healthy.

It is home to scores of significant natural heritage features such as wetlands and kettle lakes. These features are part of the habitats of rare, sensitive and threatened animals and plants. The government has the means—the Oak Ridges moraine conservation plan and the Niagara Escarpment plan—to protect the environment in parts of the Golden Horseshoe. These plans are explicitly directed toward the protection and enhancement of these significant natural features. For example, the Oak Ridges moraine is an essential source of Ontario's drinking water. It provides a recharge zone for groundwater and its aquifers that provide clean drinking water for over 250,000 residents in central Ontario.

Source protection is a critical element of our government's comprehensive strategy to protect Ontario's drinking water, and our government is moving forward quickly to protect our sources of drinking water. But the Golden Horseshoe needs a coordinated approach. As the land in the Golden Horseshoe is identified as a region, any plan to protect it should be regional in scope. But how to achieve this is the question.

We could use the models provided by the Oak Ridges moraine conservation plan or the Niagara Escarpment plan. These plans are based on natural heritage systems and compatible rural land uses. Such natural systems can provide the framework for developing legislation that protects and enhances the health, diversity, abundance and connectivity of natural heritage features and functions.

A water resource system-based framework could protect and, where necessary, improve or restore a clean and abundant water supply, and healthy, functioning aquifers. Environmental protection, outdoor education, recreational opportunities, tourism benefits, public access and natural heritage appreciation within the proposed greenbelt would all be achieved.

The proposed Greenbelt Protection Act will allow us the time we need to discuss all those issues. It will allow us the time to seek out and provide the balance we need. We must discuss how to manage a greenbelt in the future, for the generations of Ontarians to come. The Greenbelt Protection Act provides for a time out in the greenbelt area and in the Golden Horseshoe.

The bill also includes a moratorium. The proposed moratorium would stop new urban development on key rural and agricultural lands within the greenbelt study area. The moratorium is a time out that we need for discussion.

We need to talk about it. We need to go through the issues that all of us have, not only as Ontarians but as residents of the greenbelt area. So I am again very proud to speak in support of Bill 27, the Greenbelt Protection Act, 2004.

Ms Churley: I want to acknowledge the graciousness of the Conservative Party and the Liberal Party, who

agreed to change the rotation a little bit, so I could—we cooperate from time to time—speak before them.

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): You do.

Ms Churley: I do, I do, from time to time.

I have a lot to say about this bill, so I'll just get on with it. We made an agreement some time ago that we would get this through in a certain amount of time. We're sticking to that agreement, of course. Today is the final day of third reading debate.

I represented New Democrats on the committee and put forward a number of amendments which I very much hoped would be accepted, and they weren't. I'm sad to say that the Minister of Municipal Affairs—sorry, I got a note and got distracted here for a second—said earlier in his speech that this is an “extremely limited piece of legislation.” I wrote that down because I think that his explanation for what he meant by “extremely limited” legislation would be different from what I took from it. I think what he was trying to say is that this is just one small piece in bigger legislation that's going to come forward, bigger plans for preserving green space.

But how I took it fits right into the theme of what I have to say about this legislation, and that is that it's an extremely limited piece of legislation. It doesn't do what the minister and the parliamentary assistant and, I'm sure, other Liberals have been told the bill will actually do. It will not do it.

1630

I tried to point that out in committee. And it's not just me. The Conservatives are opposing the bill, and they're opposing it for a whole different set of reasons. They didn't support my amendments either, and I understood why they didn't, because they came at it from another perspective. The Liberals are trying to have it both ways. They're trying to be green and say, “We are trying to conserve and preserve, and this is a ground-breaking piece of legislation that does that.” But it doesn't.

I'm going to read some quotes from other experts, certainly people who have more expertise than I do about the problems with this bill and why, because the amendments were not accepted, this piece of legislation is simply not going to work. When I first heard that there was going to be a greenbelt—and to viewers out there and people who may read these remarks, I don't know if most people understand what “greenbelt” legislation means. It sounds fairly dry, but I would say to people that they should really take notice and pay attention to what's going on here, because there are a lot of pretty words said here today by the minister and Liberal members. It sounds really good unless you look into the implications of the omissions from this bill.

The minister, I think, made a point of singling me out—I was the member from the third party who was on the committee—and almost, I think, tried to make me look foolish by saying, “She actually proposed that we expand the greenbelt. We can't do that.” He made it sound as though that was a foolish thing to suggest. Well, I've got to say that when the government first introduced the greenbelt, I was quite enthusiastic about it. You

know, Mr Speaker, that I have been known to stand up and support, even with the previous government, the Conservatives—it was few and far between, but if government brings in good legislation, I will criticize the parts of it that I think need to be, but I will also applaud it if I think it's good legislation. I was prepared to do that with this, but it isn't good legislation. I tried my best to fix the holes, because it's like Swiss cheese right now, there are so many holes in it. But it didn't happen.

I was aware—we were all aware—of the government's green reputation that it tried to build when it was in opposition, especially around the Oak Ridges moraine. Mr Mike Colle made quite a fuss at the time about the government's position on the Oak Ridges moraine and fought very hard to urge and push the government to bring in legislation on that. In the election campaign, they promised that they would stop, halt in their tracks, the 6,000 new homes that the previous government was going to allow. Then after the election came one of the first, if not the first, significant broken promises by the new Liberal government. “Oh, we looked into it, our legal people,” as though they didn't have legal people—how many lawyers were in that party and still are? I don't think you're a lawyer, Mr Speaker—thank goodness, eh?—but there were lawyers in that party who should have known.

I can tell you, just as the Liberals knew there was a deficit but ignored it during the campaign for practical reasons, they knew that there were legal problems involved in stopping the building of those homes on the Oak Ridges moraine, but went ahead and made the promise, then couldn't deliver. They got into pretty deep trouble over that. At least there was enough guilt out of that, and the desire to show that they truly are green, that they came forward with a plan for greenbelt legislation. But what happened is a far cry from what we were promised.

There are a number of problems with the bill, which I will get into in a few minutes, but because the minister in particular pointed out some of the things I said about expanding it, because it's way too small, I think I'm going to read you some quotes from experts who came before the committee to tell us, the committee, and the government in particular, what was wrong and what they had to do fix the bill. And they didn't listen.

Here is a quote, and it's a fairly lengthy one. It encapsulates fairly well the nub of the problem with what we've referred to as leapfrog development, which I'll go into in a few minutes. Although there are many other problems associated with the gaps in this bill, I think the leapfrog aspect of development is one of the biggest problems, if not the biggest, with the bill.

Here's what Dr Rick Smith from Environmental Defence Canada had to say. First he talked about the significance if the greenbelt is done right. I'm going to start quoting. He says:

“Done poorly, this greenbelt has the potential to contribute to leapfrog development, a concept that is so well understood, it actually has a name. Why would we

repeat the problem that we know can occur with leapfrog development? Done poorly, the greenbelt could be carved up by roads and eaten away over time. It could be as stillborn and unsuccessful an initiative as the ill-fated parkway belt—a chunk of land that was supposed to be a greenbelt and regrettably is now known as the 407. They say the definition of insanity is repeating the same thing twice and expecting a different outcome the second time around. We certainly don't want to repeat the parkway belt experience, and we have some common-sense amendments to propose to you today to help the committee make sure that this greenbelt is done right.

"The Ontario Greenbelt Alliance members believe that in order to be successful, the greenbelt must be planned according to the following principles:

"We should think big and not small." So it's not just me, Minister, saying that these amendments should have been made; I'm quoting the experts here now. "The greenbelt must link the Niagara Escarpment, the Oak Ridges moraine and the Algonquin Park-Adirondack state park axis"—I'm having trouble reading here; I need my glasses—"as a unified natural heritage system. This protection plan has been discussed for years by scientists. It has come to be known as NOAH." We heard a lot about NOAH. Those on the committee will remember this. It was completely ignored, but we heard about it. "Connecting these four existing protected areas will form the greenbelt's backbone and support steps to reverse the fragmentation of natural areas, the loss of biodiversity.... The last thing Ontario needs is another isolated island of green."

He goes on to say, finally:

"The good news is that Ontario doesn't have to reinvent the wheel when it comes to planning these sorts of ambitious corridors of protected habitats. It's being done in the Pacific northwest.... It's being done in Florida.... There are initiatives ongoing in Ontario that it would be a shame if this greenbelt didn't connect with. We have hard-working groups connecting with the MNR in eastern Ontario," and he goes on to talk about all of these groups who are working there.

What Dr Smith is saying here is that the bill needed to be amended to make the belt bigger, the study area bigger, and to make all those connections; otherwise, it doesn't work. What he was saying is, if it's done poorly, which it is, then it could make things worse. And that's what happened. That's what the bill does, in essence, because of the potential—not potential; they're buying up the land in Simcoe right now. Highways are still going to be allowed to go ahead, right in the heart of the study area, the greenbelt area. What he is saying is that it could in fact create a worse problem than we have now.

I am going to read to you as well from another expert. I'm sure many people here are familiar with Dr Mark Winfield. He is now with the Pembina Institute. He came forward and talked at length about the problem of not taking off the table for the time being the whole series of 400-series highway extensions in the Golden Horseshoe region. He talks about the implications of that and the

problems with keeping the highways until we decide what it is we want to do in the greenbelt. I want to come back again to the leapfrogging and what he says about that. Dr Winfield says:

"Significant development pressures are also emerging in the areas immediately beyond the greenbelt study area to be established by Bill 27. These potential developments highlight the possibility for leapfrog low-density urbanization in response to the greenbelt initiative." Listen to this quote carefully. That's why this is so important. He says: "Such development patterns would defeat the underlying purposes of the greenbelt initiative of containing urban sprawl in the region."

I have just quoted two of the experts in this area, who did an enormous amount of work and know the history of what happens when we don't protect the land and make it a bigger area, but there were many more who came forward and told the government they needed to make amendments.

1640

I based most of my amendments on the advice we got from the experts who came forward to tell us that this bill would not work unless it was expanded and unless infrastructure and highways were included in the moratorium. The only amendment the government listened to at all, and the minister referred to it, was the Niagara Escarpment, because it was left out. I put forward an amendment—I've now brought forward a private member's bill to cover it—as well as the government, to include the Niagara Escarpment in the protection. But it only went half as far. Under the government's amendment, and I don't know if the minister is aware of this but I pointed it out in committee, it doesn't get the same protection as the Oak Ridges moraine gets from the previous government.

My amendment actually gave that full protection. The government went halfway there, but didn't give it—they said they were worried about lawsuits. That's the reason they didn't do it.

I wanted to tell you, Minister, why it was important that you should have instructed your members, because we know how committees work. They all sat there, and I think some of them were sympathetic to—

Hon Mr Gerretsen: Not our members.

Ms Churley: Oh, yes. They all sat there and voted, one by one, against every amendment I made and could not give any reasonable explanations as to why they are opposing them.

Hon Mr Gerretsen: That's belittling them.

Ms Churley: Oh, the minister says they weren't told what to do. They would have, because—

Interjections.

Ms Churley: Oh, they're getting antsy back there. If they really cared about it and if they really wanted to be able to go out and say, "We are bringing in comprehensive legislation that is actually going to protect green space and agricultural land," they would have supported my amendments, the NDP amendments, or they would have brought them forward themselves. They didn't.

Let's talk about why this is important, because it is very important. In Toronto and many other parts of Ontario it is now the first smog day, not June 21, that marks the arrival of summer. We know that a large part of this smog is created by congested highways, the by-product of urban sprawl. We know that urban sprawl is gobbling up green space in southern Ontario at an unprecedented rate.

According to the Neptis Foundation, at the current rate an additional 260,000 acres of rural land will be urbanized by 2031, almost double the size of the city of Toronto. Try to imagine that. About 92% of the land is Ontario's best farmland. That's why this legislation is so important, and why I'm so angry that it is so inadequate. Sprawling patterns of growth unnecessarily destroy green space and farmland, pollute rivers, streams and other waterways and force us to continue to be overly dependent on motor vehicles, which in turn fuel air pollution and global climate change. What a vicious circle we are in here.

A few more facts about why we need stronger legislation here: The Golden Horseshoe area of Ontario is growing by more than 115,000 people a year. In 15 years, it will be the largest urban region in North America, behind only New York and Los Angeles. The greater Toronto area has approved or developed 128,000 acres since 1989, a rate of 9,100 acres per year. In comparison, the city of Portland, Oregon, set an urban growth boundary in 1980 and has consumed land at only 1,700 acres per year. So it can be done.

Passenger cars and trucks account for nearly half of personal greenhouse gas emissions, which lead to global climate change. Vehicles in Ontario contribute about 40% of the pollutants that cause smog.

The Ontario Medical Association estimates that 1,900 people die prematurely every year in Ontario because of air pollution. The Toronto Board of Trade estimates that gridlock costs the greater Toronto area \$2 billion per year in truck and delivery vehicle delays. So this isn't just about the environment and our health; it's about our economy too. By 2031 the hours of delay on a typical weekday experienced by auto drivers around the greater Toronto area are projected to rise—are you ready for this number?—by 300%. The Toronto and Region Conservation Authority has identified habitat loss as the leading reason for the rapid decline of species diversity in southern Ontario.

As I said, when the greenbelt proposal was first announced, because of all these issues and problems, we expressed some enthusiasm for it. But my enthusiasm has completely waned because the bill in its current form—obviously the Liberals have a majority, and they're going to pass it and pretend they're actually protecting green space here. The Liberals are proposing a greenbelt so full of holes that it more resembles Swiss cheese than a protected natural area.

The government purports the greenbelt act to be a cornerstone in its plan to prevent urban sprawl from usurping the Golden Horseshoe. The act institutes a year-

long pause on urban development in the region as the task force completes the plan that is supposed to establish a permanent greenbelt.

I presented to the general government committee a number of amendments that would have rectified many of the holes and problems in the bill so that it could actually achieve its purported purpose, but all the Liberal members rejected them—every single one of them.

I'm going to talk a bit about leapfrog. There are a few areas I'm going to touch on in particular in this, although there are many problems. As I said, the act in its current form is not only ineffectual in stopping urban sprawl, but it actually encourages it because it sets the stage, has set the stage already, in that this bill is before us. Again I'll refer to leapfrog development. The greenbelt area is too small in size. Developers can, and are, just hopping over the area to build on the fringes rather than concentrate construction of new units in existing settled areas. Construction of low-density housing will continue.

Simcoe is an area we talk most about, have heard most about and will continue to hear about when it comes to this leapfrog development. Because it's not included in this greenbelt moratorium, developers are already up there buying the land, planning to build. Another amendment that the Liberal members of the committee did not accept—the minister, I think, was somewhat trying to ridicule me earlier by saying, "She suggested that we put a moratorium on infrastructure and highway construction during this short moratorium." He said that's not necessary. Well, I'm saying to him and the Liberal government, the evidence is already there. We're repeating the same mistake over again if we allow this to happen.

You construct the roads, you build the infrastructure and the development comes. Once the infrastructure is there—you've got the big pipe in King City, which I'm going to get to in a few minutes. No matter what happens after—you may decide and talk about the other processes coming later—if you've got the big pipe, you've got the infrastructure and you've got the highways, what do you think is going to happen? It's going to get developed. It doesn't take rocket science to figure that out. That's what's going to happen, and it's happening already.

I want to quote Jane Jacobs in her essay "The Greening of the City," which was published recently—I don't know if anybody saw it—in the New York Times magazine about a month ago. It uses a great vegetable simile to describe the sprawl that continues to grow before us. She writes, "Look at them: monocultural housing tracts, erected on ever-larger scales, like so many endless fields of cabbage." That's Jane Jacobs—very expressive.

1650

I said in committee, and I'll say again now, that this was the acid test of the Liberal government's commitment to the greenbelt. This bill, in its current form, does not succeed in protecting against urban sprawl in some of Ontario's most environmentally sensitive areas. Today is your last chance. We could have it go to committee of the whole and expand the scope of the study area to protect agricultural and environmentally sensitive areas.

In the committee debate, the government members claimed that leapfrog development in bordering areas will be addressed in a growth management initiative being prepared by the Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal. However, this separate plan, I can assure you—and I said why earlier—will be of little relevance and use, as developers are already buying up the land in the Simcoe area as we speak. I pointed that out in the committee as well.

My concerns were echoed, as I mentioned, by Dr Mark Winfield, Dr Smith and others. They wanted to expand it. There were 10 hot spots that were brought forward as problematic and that should be included. None of them was included. Every single recommendation made by experts who came in to tell us why the bill would not work without it was ignored.

The goals of establishing a viable greenbelt and promoting sustainable development in the region are also being undermined because infrastructure expansion is not subject to this development moratorium. Infrastructure planning needs to take its direction from the greenbelt plan, not vice versa, if sprawl is to be contained.

The minister is shaking his head. It's true; it's not just me saying this. The experts will tell you that. They came to the committee and told your members that. It's very clear; it's not like we're reinventing the wheel here. The evidence is all there, and you're just repeating the mistake. This is not going to work.

I mentioned the Niagara Escarpment, and I just want to mention again that I have a private member's bill before the House because my amendment was not accepted.

Also on the Niagara Escarpment—I've raised this several times in the House, and the government says they can do nothing about it: the first year-round town since the 1970s, when Niagara Escarpment protection was established under the then-Conservative government. Every successive government since has built on that. But this Liberal government is not doing anything to stop this year-round town, Castle Glen, from being built on the Niagara Escarpment. It's absurd. It's a beautiful area, and the minister could still step in and declare the provincial interest and stop it. But they've done nothing. I will continue to press to have my private member's bill on that passed.

The bill's failure to protect environmentally sensitive areas and prime agricultural areas from sprawl also points to the government's fleeting commitment to establish a real, viable greenbelt and to put into practice smart growth principles. It could have achieved its purported purpose in my amendment to expand the study area so that it matched the central Smart Growth area that was put in place under the Conservative government. In its current form, it does not offer much-needed protection to some of southern Ontario's most environmentally sensitive areas. Development on these lands is already in the hopper, and you are completely missing the boat here.

There are a couple of other areas I want to go into. The big pipe: I mentioned it today in response to the

Minister of the Environment's bragging that she did in a press conference today on a white paper on continuing with source water protection. I just had a couple of minutes to respond today, but one of the things I talked to her about, Minister and Liberal members who are here and listening attentively—I say that sarcastically—

Hon Mr Gerretsen: We're listening.

Interjection: I'm listening, Marilyn.

Ms Churley: Oh, good, some of them are listening. Late last week—I got their attention then.

The big pipe: Do you know about the big pipe? It's a sewer works expansion project that's been around for a long time, which will connect King City to the York-Durham sewer system. It received a draft certificate of approval from the Ministry of the Environment, from your government.

Interjection: What's that got to do with the greenbelt?

Ms Churley: It lies on class 1 agricultural land on the moraine. That's what it has to do with the greenbelt. See, she didn't even know. That's what it's got to do with it. It lies on class 1 agricultural land on the moraine, at the headwaters of the Humber River.

Hon Mr Gerretsen: It's a pipe.

Ms Churley: Yes, and why do you think they're building the pipe? To allow more development. They don't get it. It's scary.

Hon Mr Gerretsen: Yes, we get it.

Ms Churley: No, you don't. The majority of King City residents and councillors, in opposing the big pipe, fighting against it—they've been fighting against it for almost a decade. Most of the present councillors were elected on an anti-pipe platform.

This is going to get big. This is going to get really big. It's going to become your Oak Ridges moraine. The big pipe will flood Oak Ridges moraine with sprawl and threaten the environmentally sensitive headwaters of the Humber River. That's how it has something to do with source protection, which is why I raised it today.

Build the infrastructure and developers follow. Again, that's common knowledge. Therefore, we know what's going to happen. All those areas where you're going to allow infrastructure to be developed while you work out this plan, we now know, will be developed. These residents and councillors are very correct in their fear that this massive sewer expansion is being constructed for the purpose of inviting intense development into this natural heritage area.

The big pipe breaks the principle of protecting water at its source. Despite the minister's announcement today pertaining to source protection, a draft certificate of approval has been granted for a project that will impair the Humber watershed, a source of Toronto's drinking water. Development will threaten sensitive areas and "the 'King's Crown' natural heritage system, a conservation biology plan designed by local residents using the best available science."

You used to go after the previous government for not paying attention to the best available science. The best available science here is telling you that this is going to

be a problem, and you're not listening. Federal and provincial staff scientists all agree that if the YDSS service corridor is further extended to villages such as King City, base flows to rivers flowing into the city of Toronto will be further disrupted.

I'm going to quote Councillor Jane Underhill, because she deserves to be quoted for her fight against this pipe. I'm sure you're familiar with her; she has tirelessly fought against the extension since the idea was first proposed, for purposes of protecting the moraine and the environmental health of downstream populations. This is what she says: "While it has many local dimensions, the big-pipe fight also has regional environmental implications. Source waters will be damaged by the big pipe; instead, source waters could be protected through development of waste water treatment systems that keep the water in the Humber watershed. We need to respect source waters at source, rather than exporting them far and wide through big-pipe systems."

STORM, the Save the Oak Ridges Moraine coalition, explains this in detail. They talk about all the problems with building this big pipe: "Experts have confirmed that the waterworks will not beget significant improvements to drinking water quality."

But there is an opportunity to stop this. Let me tell you, there's going to be a huge public outcry and you're going to be forced to. So you might as well just do it now. And I will be part of that fight, I guarantee you. You will not hear the last of this one. Just like the Tories had to eventually back down on the Oak Ridges moraine, you're going to have to back down on this one, so why don't you just do it now? Save us a lot of time, money and trouble.

1700

Great Lakes United, a very respected body, an international coalition of Great Lakes groups—they're involved in trying to stop this big pipe. They've called on Premier Dalton McGuinty to honour his government's commitment to protect the Oak Ridges moraine by cancelling the certificates of approval for this. Then the Minister of the Environment, under the Ontario Water Resources Act, can intervene in the decision-making process or overrule this decision. So I'm asking again: Just do it. Get on with it.

Before I close, I want to talk about some other things that are happening here. There was a very interesting few moments in the committee hearings where I wasn't paying a whole lot of attention to this aspect of the bill that I'm going to outline to you now—and I'd listen carefully to this. This is a foreshadowing of things to come. I think I'll title it.

The Duffins Rouge agricultural preserve: I assume, Minister, you're well aware of what that is. That's the sensitive area within the belt itself that is at threat from development in the Duffins Rouge agricultural preserve in Pickering. Duffins Rouge is a 7,400-acre agricultural preserve that was promised 100% protection by the former and current Liberal provincial government. In 1999, farmers were granted agricultural easements with

the understanding that the lands would remain rural. The city of Pickering recently commissioned a growth management study, I understand paid for by the developers—

Interjection.

Ms Churley: You admit that? That's an interesting fact—calling for development in the Duffins Rouge agricultural preserve. I understand that there was a meeting last night and there's going to be a meeting next week to decide if the growth management study is accepted.

The threat to this agricultural preserve, in particular the possibility that the government will lift the protection it currently receives, was the topic of discussion at a recent edition of Studio 2 on TVO. Susanna Kelley from TVO—I must say, people have been paying a whole lot of attention to this issue. I know that Ms Kelley was, under the previous government, following very closely the Oak Ridges moraine and other development issues, and she's continuing her commitment to that. So you and your government are being watched on this, Minister. I'm very pleased that there is a journalist keeping a close eye so that these things are not going on behind closed doors in secret. You know they shouldn't be.

She, on TVO, recently talked a bit about what happened at committee. I was sitting there and I was kind of confused about an amendment that the Conservatives made. The Liberals were just, *carte blanche*, turning down—as was I—Conservative amendments. All of a sudden, Mr Wayne Arthurs, who's the MPP for the area—

Hon Mr Gerretsen: You can't name a member here.

Ms Churley: Sure I can. He's a member of the committee. He doesn't want me to name him. Why not?

He made an amendment to the amendment that the Tories made. I didn't catch on for a second. I'm wondering, "What's going on here?", but it's all straightened out now, thanks to some research.

Hon Mr Gerretsen: Did the amendment pass?

Ms Churley: No, it didn't pass, but listen to this. This is what was said on TVO by Susanna Kelley. She said, "Well, there is something called the agricultural preserve land. A lot of it is owned by farmers, but there is a great deal of interest on the part of some developers and builders to build there. It was—there was a ministerial zoning order put on it by the Conservative government that it would be protected in perpetuity. But Mr Wayne Arthurs, the MPP for the area, is in favour of opening up that agricultural preserve, or parts of it, for development."

Hon Mr Gerretsen: He has been very consistent.

Ms Churley: Yes, he has been very consistent, and he continues to be consistent.

"So he has been fighting for this for quite a long time." Of course, he used to be mayor before he got elected here. The conversation went on to say that, "While he was mayor of Pickering"—Ms Kelley talked about the growth management study that was done for the city and paid for by developers and builders, and, as she said, surprise, surprise, it recommends opening up the agricultural preserve. Did you know that, Minister, that that's the recommendation?

The hearings will continue, the talks in the area, but Mr Arthurs, when he tried to move this amendment that would exempt it in the committee—I was taken by surprise. I didn't quite know what he was up to, but it turns out that he's still working—

Hon Mr Gerretsen: Did the amendment pass?

Ms Churley: No. He was voted down—you're right—by the Liberal members on the committee. But it shows that he's still trying to do that.

Ms Kelley went on to say in this show that she was trying to get to the bottom of this too. She said she talked to the people in the Premier's office about this and said, "Are you aware that Mr Arthurs has been doing this?" Two of them said to her, "We don't want to talk to you." One said, "Go talk to Mr Gerretsen," the municipal affairs minister. Another said, "Go talk to our PR people." PR people?

Ms Kelley says, "I just want to know if you're aware that Mr Arthurs is doing this." A third one finally said to me, "Well, I'm not surprised." And when I said to him, "Can you give me a guarantee that you will, as you promised in your campaign, protect this land in perpetuity?" they said, "Well, it depends." And I said, "On what?" And they said, "Well, the Greenbelt Task Force recommends or what the—David Caplan's infrastructure initiative recommends later."

She says, "I also found out that in the Greenbelt Task Force, guess what's been sent to every member of the task force this week?" Mr Paikin says, "Tell us." She says, "The growth management plan done for the city of Pickering, and the developers and builders have been showing up as well at the public consultations on this."

This is quite revealing.

Interjection.

Ms Churley: The minister is chat-chat-chatting away over there. I think he's getting nervous because all of this has been revealed now, thanks to the research and investigative journalism by Ms Kelley from TVO.

Hon Mr Gerretsen: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I just want the member to know that I'm not nervous and I'm listening to every word she's saying.

The Deputy Speaker: That's not a point of order.

Ms Churley: You might want to get up on this, because the other thing that Ms Kelley pointed out—she looked into Mr Arthurs's campaign contributions. You know how we used to go after the Conservatives for all the money they got from developers and then they come in here and try to get in bed with the developers? We found out that over a third of Mr Arthurs's campaign contributions were from developers or builders who have an interest in developing that preserve, including 23 contributions of \$1,000 each from numbered companies and companies related to one address at 27 Buggy Lane. Did you know about that, Minister—Buggy Lane? Everybody up there is familiar with that address. That's the golf course that's owned by one of the builders.

Mr Arthurs, according to Ms Kelley, was asked about this, and he said, "I don't see a conflict of interest here." I can only imagine that the former mayor received these

big campaign donations as the mayor was quite in favour—the developers and the builders did this study. We'll be watching this very closely.

In closing—

Hon Mr Gerretsen: Are you voting for this bill or not?

Ms Churley: Well, I'm going to hold you in suspense on this because—we'll see; we're going to delay the vote, because I have to tell you quite honestly that I'm having a lot of trouble supporting this bill. I really am. The fact that a bill is coming forward that purports to improve the situation and is actually in some ways going to make it worse—it's pretty hard to support.

On the other hand, I know what the government will do if I don't: every chance, say, "Oh, Ms Churley, the great environmentalist, didn't support the greenbelt legislation." They're selling it out there as though it's this great piece of environmental legislation when in fact it isn't.

1710

It's like when Michael Prue in committee voted against—here is what happened—the retroactivity of the cancellation of the private school tax credit. He voted against it. You know, everybody here knows, we are against credits, taxpayers' money going to help people pay for private schools. We felt the money should go, and still do, into the public school system. Michael Prue, the member for Beaches-East York, on principle, in committee, voted against it simply because he didn't think the retroactivity piece of it was fair, and neither do I. But every time a member of the Liberal Party has an opportunity to go after us—because they are on the defensive all the time now—they throw out, without being fair—

Mrs Liz Sandals (Guelph-Wellington): Who's being defensive now?

Ms Churley: Listen to them, Mr Speaker. They are running so scared, let me tell you.

They don't point out that what he was really voting against was the retroactivity.

Hon Mr Gerretsen: Are you nervous, Marilyn?

Ms Churley: Well, I certainly don't want my own principles to be used against me.

In closing, it was—

Interjection.

Ms Churley: You believe in dinging people retroactively. You believe, these Liberals believe, in dinging people retroactively. That's what they passed, that's what they have said. They certainly did. They took some money away from people who, in good faith, paid this money. They don't care about these people.

Interjections.

Ms Churley: Listen: "Yap, yap, yap, yap."

So, in closing, this is bad legislation. It does not achieve what it said it was going to do. The government refused to accept the amendments and don't even take it seriously. But they will be sorry, because this is going to come back to haunt them. The leapfrog development, the big pipe, the agricultural preserve, the highways, the

infrastructure that's allowed to be built: All these things are going to come back to haunt you. You are sitting pretty today, you think it sounds like you are doing a good thing, but just as the Oak Ridges moraine got the previous government, this is going to get you.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): As we know, this proposed Greenbelt Protection Act, 2004, is obviously proposing a permanent Golden Horseshoe greenbelt. We have been hearing during this afternoon's debate and previous debate that this bill, Bill 27, would create a greenbelt study area in the Golden Horseshoe area, including Oak Ridges, the Niagara Escarpment, the Niagara tender fruit lands, and would also establish a moratorium, temporarily preventing new urban uses in portions of that study area.

We should know that this is not enough for a number of groups in the province of Ontario, and it is seen by some, as was mentioned earlier, to be limited.

I will make mention of a much broader proposal by a newly formed greenbelt alliance and Earthroots. Earthroots, along with other members of the Ontario Greenbelt Alliance—a fairly recent amalgamation, as I understand—is proposing the implementation of what they refer to as NOAH. NOAH refers to the Niagara Escarpment to the Oak Ridges moraine north to Algonquin Park and a much broader area also including and heading south across the border to the Adirondack State Park heritage system.

Earthroots contends that the GTA population is projected to increase to six million people by 2021, and they feel that we must act to ensure an environmentally and economically healthy future for this area. Having said that, I think we should all pause in this House to consider that figure: six million people by the year 2021; six million people living in what I consider a relatively small area in North America. Six million people—from my perspective, there is something inherently wrong with this picture. That is too many people. However, the projections are there. This government is taking a step to deal with what I consider quite a daunting population figure. Earthroots uses these kinds of population projections to underline the need to protect natural spaces by creating a very large greenbelt area through urban planning controls. The option they envision is that we will be facing a smoggy, traffic-congested megalopolis, sprawling from Lake Erie in my area to Lake Ontario to Lake Simcoe.

I also want to mention another initiative I was involved in previously. I wish to draw the attention of the House to the merits of a very positive initiative that began in January 2000 with the creation of what is known as the Great Lakes Heritage Coast. The Great Lakes Heritage Coast was identified as a signature site by the previous government.

I know the parliamentary assistant for MNR is present, who will be forging ahead and perhaps carrying on the work of a former parliamentary assistant. Not only Ted Chudleigh, but I had a great deal of involvement with the Great Lakes Heritage Coast, a project that seemed

almost, I wouldn't say too broad, but too long in scope, stretching, as the parliamentary assistant would know, from the Pigeon River up on the Minnesota border, south of Thunder Bay, across the north shore of Lake Superior, continuing down Manitoulin Island, which was latterly added to the planning area for the coast, stretching down Georgian Bay to the Severn River. It's a project of the Ministry of Natural Resources, one of a number of signature sites.

Interjection.

Mr Barrett: I'm not arguing against that. I'm actually addressing much of my remarks to the good work done by the Ministry of Natural Resources.

The Great Lakes Heritage Coast is one of 10 signature sites, as I recall: the Nipigon Basin, a very broad area to the north of Thunder Bay, and having spent time on Lake Nipigon, I consider it in a sense one of the Great Lakes; the Kawartha Highlands, a signature site much further to the south, and many will know of some of the recent controversy around the Kawartha Highlands signature site; and there is an additional signature site that was announced latterly—that would be St Williams crown forest, which I am very proud to have been involved in. That actually is in my area, down on Lake Erie.

Progress to date with respect to the heritage coast: It was launched in January 2000, MNR established a director position and four staff were assigned to this project. Considerable work was done initially in marketing, with brochures, computer disks, posters and pens. There were some Group of Seven paintings that were reproduced, as I understand, and distributed very broadly from one end to the other.

Over the course of that project and up to the fall of 2003, the team responsible for this planning initiative, the heritage coast, prepared a strategy for the protection and sustainable use of the area. It was a document titled *Setting Sail*. It culminated three years of public input, interministerial direction, and of course MNR working with the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and certainly working with the Ministry of Transportation—very important with respect to signage, for example, something that's very important when you're attempting to pull together a project like this, but also to try to communicate to people—tourists, for example—just what's going on. *Setting Sail* forms a blueprint for an initiative that I feel can result in not only a world-class tourist destination, but a natural heritage destination. It's said the coast would rival areas such as the Cape Breton highlands. It does really have the potential to put Ontario on the world stage as a place to visit and to take a look at Ontario's fresh water and, by and large, unspoiled coast. I say that having, in my younger days, travelled in over 50 countries, I suppose. The northern forest to me is equivalent to the Himalayas or equivalent to what I saw in the Amazon, for example. It's something. Many people don't get up there and we don't realize what we have when you look at it from a global perspective.

1720

A bit of bad news: The document was never released. The election came along. So we have a timing issue

there. The project has not been implemented and I look to the present parliamentary assistant, who knows the north very well and knows this project very well, to continue to serve as a champion for what is a very, very large planning project, not unlike what we're debating here today.

The goals of the greenbelt legislation, the goals of groups like Earthroots, for example, seem laudable. I guess when you look at southern Ontario, you've got a little different kettle of fish here compared to the heritage coast, where much of our work involved crown land. In the south we're dealing with private land, we're dealing with landowners—farmers, for example—the owners, the stewards of the land. Farmers, in my view—and this government would know this—cannot be ignored, farmers must not be ignored. The members of the province's Greenbelt Task Force are taking heed, and certainly must take heed, of the voices of farmers—voices that were heard recently at a public meeting in St Catharines. Most of those voices addressed the fact that the province has imposed a development freeze on the Golden Horseshoe during the study and throughout the various stages of this legislative process. They are worried.

They're worried the bill's implementation will hinder their rights, limit their rights, by freezing development on their lands, and their concern is that there is no indication of compensation. Farmers are concerned that the government is seen as protecting the environment. They're concerned that it may well have forgotten about protecting farming and protecting farmers.

Farmers already are in a situation where they see their present-day opportunities being threatened economically. I think that goes without saying, whether it's as a result of soaring energy prices, the beef border closure, poor growing conditions which continue yet again in much of Ontario with what has been a cold and certainly a very wet spring, and higher taxes. Again, this government, in a sense, has frozen their assets without compensation. What opportunity does that offer to farm families? The average age of a farmer is what I consider alarmingly high. How do we encourage the next generation to take a look at the family farm when farm debt is growing faster than growing crops or growing livestock? The issue in many quarters in the agricultural community is the perception of lack of adequate government support and, worse yet, the perception in some of the direction of this legislation, the spectre of government intrusion. How do we save farmers?

How do we keep them on an even keel without allowing them, with confidence, to plan on continuing to make a living by farming and, on retirement, to be able to have that guarantee that they can enjoy the financial fruit of their labour?

Agricultural lands are a valuable resource. They're privately owned, and the majority of generations of families have this perception. If younger members of the farm community see this perception under threat, they will have less desire to take over the business when they balance off some of the restrictions that are being

discussed in this legislation with the opportunities that they know have to be there for them to hang on to the farm.

The answer is not to put in place legislation that removes further opportunity for farmers. If the government does decide to tie the hands of farmers even further, surely there must be compensation, and regrettably I see no sign of that in this legislation.

I wish to quote the words of Dr Riina Bray, a physician, chair of the Ontario College of Family Physicians. They have an environmental health committee. She is quoted as stating, "Ensuring a well-protected ecosystem subsequently impacts on the physical, social and psychological well-being of our population, from the very young to the elderly, surely, if we are to expect our farmers to sacrifice land opportunities for these vital societal benefits, society must be expected to shoulder some of the economic burden."

For that reason, I join the OFA, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, requesting—and I think the OFA is demanding—compensation for any loss of farmers' equity and, with that, demanding a clear statement from the minister, from the government, that the long-term viability of farm operations is ensured so that future generations would have confidence to stick with it.

It's in this context of essentially a government-private sector partnership that I wish to speak a minute or two and to highlight what I consider a very ambitious, farmer-driven conservation plan. It is taking shape in my riding, in Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant, as a pilot project. I know it's seriously being considered in Prince Edward Island. It originated in the province of Manitoba. The program goes by the moniker ALUS, which stands for Alternate Land Use Services. The ALUS program, headed up in my riding by our local Norfolk Land Stewardship Council, not only protects and enhances natural areas but also further encourages environmental partnership between rural and urban, a partnership that includes all stakeholders: government, of course; landowners—in this case, farmers; and conservationists.

The thinking behind this program holds that good stewardship of the environment is not only a personal responsibility; it's a public value. It is a value based on, in this case, payments to farmers for rendering ecological services that provide environmental benefit to society as a whole. Under this farmer-driven plan, a variety of performance incentives or reward options, if you will, are included: property tax credits, conservation agreements. These are all proposed to encourage farmers to develop and maintain these ecological services which would create markets for public resources like clean air, clean water, wildlife habitat. This also presents an opportunity to nurture the environmental ethic that is inherent within the agricultural community and also to communicate the good things that farmers are doing for the environment and our natural world in the province of Ontario.

The partnership that this program offers is voluntary; it's participatory. It's building on existing programs like the environmental farm plan, but it recognizes the distinct

nature, the contributions of many other conservation initiatives on our landscape. It further recognizes that while protecting existing ecological values of the landscape, it's vitally important also to reward those stewards of the land.

1730

Payments for ecological services would create markets, as I indicated, markets for public resources; many resources that currently exist on private land, and I think of wildlife habitats alone. Because no markets currently exist for public resources on private lands, farmers are essentially forced to maximize production, albeit on occasion government-subsidized, from private resources such as livestock, crops and the soil itself.

Under ALUS, the Alternate Land Use Services program, farmers in rural communities would benefit from a new source of income, obviously, and Canadians would diminish the need for further environmental legislation, somewhat similar to the kind we're discussing today. I've mentioned that farmers have to be considered when it comes to government land protection plans, and that's why I feel this ALUS program does have potential.

As I've said, this farmer-driven conservation concept was developed by farmers, initially in Manitoba, promoted by grassroots rural organizations, again in cooperation with governments, conservation groups, anyone who is really interested in planning and attempting to enhance a sustainable environment in our great province. The real winning part of this concept is that it's run by those who are most affected.

ALUS: Again, the plan is administered, controlled and directed through rural communities, through farm organizations, through institutions used by the farming community in their home area. This is the first time that all aspects of a major conservation program, including the wildlife habitat component, would be administered and delivered by farmers.

Further, ALUS is not restricted to conservation cover, wetland or wildlife. It's much broader in scope than many previous programs, the set-aside programs that have been developed in the past. It goes further than that. It has a goal to build on social and economic prosperity in rural Ontario while at the same time building on a healthier natural environment. Under these principles, it is innovative in the way that, to date, these programs have been developed in this province, by integrating environmental concerns—not only concerns, but opportunities—into the mainstream of farm communities.

There are benefits, there are advantages, and I'll list a few, of the ALUS program. It would reposition the agricultural role with respect to the environment from a reactive position—almost a circle-the-wagons position in some quarters—to something more proactive, developing a predictable revenue stream that would serve as yet another economic pillar for our farm communities.

ALUS is seen as reducing the occurrence and the need for financial crisis management, something all too common. Every several years a need arises—certainly since I've been a member of this Legislature—in the province of Ontario.

ALUS is seen as reducing government and public reliance on environmental regulations. It's seen as increasing farmer control of the emerging environmental agenda, as it targets private land. ALUS is seen as converting environmental risk to a business opportunity for farmers. It's seen as coordinating conservation initiatives at the farm gate and as building the business infrastructure, the capability to deliver these kinds of environmental or ecological services, on a profitable basis.

It's seen as addressing the financial imbalance with respect to the global marketplace. Certainly we cannot win the subsidy war in comparison to the United States or Europe. The ALUS concept, I will point out, has been checked out; it's fully accessible to our trading partners, the World Trade Organization.

ALUS has potential to provide a modicum of security for farmers who are considering retirement or succession of the farm to the next generation. As I mentioned earlier, it is felt there is a great deal of merit in this program to serve as common ground between rural and urban Ontario. Where Bill 27, as we're discussing, simply freezes development, ALUS is a program that offers the financial incentive for people to go out and plant trees; set aside marginal land and rather than grow corn, allow those cattails to come up in that corner of the field; and set aside habitat, something very important with respect to wildlife—all with government compensation paying, as I've indicated, for environmental benefits that accrue to all in Ontario, to the public at large. It's an example of what can be done to protect the environment while ensuring that farmers are not left behind, tied to land that may well lose its value due to restrictive government legislation.

This ALUS program, as I said, is happening right now in Norfolk county, down in my area. A proposed pilot project is there, down in the tobacco country, an area that needs a bit of direction from government at this point. It certainly needs some direction from our present provincial government.

With respect to this program, 37 different organizations have contributed their logo and 10 have shelled out \$45,000 for a survey, and I'm happy to say that MNR is continuing to fund the pilot project. I know \$20,000 was put forward by the previous government in 2003. It's the kind of farmer-driven program that should be considered for expansion. As we see this government ploughing ahead with restrictive legislation that seems to penalize farmers in some quarters, I just want to make the very important point that when government gets involved in this kind of legislation, you have to be cognizant of the fact that we're dealing with private land.

Since the introduction of Bill 27, farmers have worked hard to make their voices heard. However, we do have the perception that this is an urban-based government that sometimes has trouble hearing the voice of rural Ontario over the noise of the gridlock traffic within the Golden Horseshoe area.

I have much more that I could talk about. The Ontario Federation of Agriculture, to name one organization, has

put a great deal of thought into this. I ask people to consider the very broad proposal put forward through NOAH.

Just to wrap up, I'm calling for a much more inclusive approach. We, on behalf of our children and grandchildren, should be very concerned at the spectre of six million people in this part of Ontario. I'm calling on this government to take a second look and maybe see the bigger picture beyond the Golden Horseshoe, beyond simple development freezes and the inherent leap-frogging that we see occurring, and will occur. Take a second look. Take a look at a broader, province-wide conservation and compensation program that will not only maintain a program but would enhance Ontario's natural legacy for centuries to come.

1740

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): I'm pleased to rise on third reading of Bill 27. I know my colleague from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke also wants to comment.

First, I think the opposition parties' point is clear. We advocate a more comprehensive approach, as my colleague from Haldimand-Norfolk talked about, a greater consultative approach, one that addresses the issues as a whole in the province, as opposed to the piecemeal approach that leaves a lot of questions unanswered that the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing has brought forward. I know there are promises of a growth management strategy from public infrastructure renewal shortly, but I've not heard an apt explanation and a simple explanation of why this particular area has been severed off, leaving so many questions unanswered.

Well, you know what? The reality is that this Bill 27 is nothing but a knee-jerk reaction to the spectacular flip-flop that Premier Dalton McGuinty did on the Oak Ridges moraine, a flip-flop of proportions that would make Greg Louganis proud. I think the minister probably remembers—he may have had nightmares for some time about it—that giant chipmunk that followed him around after Oak Ridges with the “I” word that I cannot repeat in the Legislature.

Hon Mr Gerretsen: I've got a picture with the chipmunk.

Mr Hudak: He has a picture of the chipmunk, and I remember what that picture would have said, that “I” word that I cannot say but that rhymes with “pants on fire.” They were not happy, the giant chipmunk and his friends, about the Premier's spectacular flip-flop on the Oak Ridges moraine. Hence Bill 27, born in this Legislature under great thought for the policy implications.

The minister earlier on in his remarks said, “Well, it's a time out.” It's not a time out, sir, I say with all due respect—a time out perhaps in the sense that some planning amendments or some bylaws may be frozen at the municipal level, but markets continue. The housing market continues apace. The pressures have simply been moved elsewhere, and we brought evidence forward at committee and in this House about the significant spikes in land prices that are occurring across this province of Ontario, which make affordable housing a challenge. My

colleague the member for Toronto-Danforth talked about the leapfrog impact as well. Those pressures continue.

It certainly is no time out for farmers who face a loss of equity and significant encumbrances to their economic viability, and no time out for municipalities that seek to grow, that have pressures to improve their infrastructure, the services they offer to the local taxpayers, and the pressure that puts on their tax rates as a result. There is no time out for that.

Farmers for a second: I asked the minister today for a simple guarantee that the concerns of farmers would be addressed at this committee when it comes forward with its recommendations, that there would be funds behind it, some dollars to back it up and put money where the mouth of the committee and the minister is, and instead I received a juvenile retort, which I think shows unfortunate disdain for the concerns of farmers that have been brought forward in this debate. It was, frankly, beneath the dignity of the way the minister usually conducts himself in the Legislature.

Art Smith from the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association said, “It is not enough just to save the land; there must be compensation.... It must be remembered that farmers choose to farm, and while it is often a lifestyle choice, they must be able to make money doing so. If not, the banks will take over.”

Heather Konefat, director of planning and development for the town of Caledon, said that the model must acknowledge that in order to protect farmland, you also have to assist the farmer. Opportunities for secondary uses in agri-tourism on the farm must be provided for. This model must provide support for the farmer as well as protection of prime agricultural areas.

Amendments that this opposition brought forward to the committee were voted down one by one, by my observation, in what appeared to be a whipped vote from the government members on the committee, and farmers and municipalities are now still without answers to their very valid concerns.

Ray Duc, the chairman of the Grape Growers of Ontario, suggests that the key to preserving the land is to preserve the growers who are already keeping it green. He goes on to say that an injection of support will be required from both the provincial and federal governments—reasonable arguments made by Ray Duc of the grape growers and other commodity groups affected by the greenbelt legislation, and even those outside of the greenbelt that are worried about incursions into their areas. Yet seven months or so after this bill was introduced, not a single answer, nor even concern or a guarantee expressed by the minister today that the farmers' concerns will be remedied or at least seriously addressed.

Municipalities: The township of Brock, during the consultation, said: “For a municipality which has seen little sustained investment by the development community over the past few years, the potential value of development of these uses will be welcomed by council,” referring to projects that are already approved or in the

process of being approved: a gravel pit, a golf course and an office facility, just to name a few. Potentially one of those, through an amendment, may go forward, but the other two are definitely in jeopardy.

"The imposition," Brock says, "of Bill 27 as it affects these applications will result in a potential loss of investment by the development community, loss of taxation revenue, particularly commercial assessment, thereby assisting to relieve the residential tax burden and loss of employment opportunities for residents, both during construction and once completed." The township of King furthers those arguments.

The mayor of Lincoln, Bill Hodgson, passionately asked the committee to support farmers and municipalities that will now be constrained from their growth, from reaching their aspirations as a community.

Whitchurch-Stouffville had some very strong comments. They have said, "The specific fear that exists of the establishment of a firm urban boundary is it's an arbitrary line." There's no physiographic nature. There's no consistency in this line, other than borne out of politics consistent with their campaign promise that they tried to get out the door after being chased by the giant chipmunk—but the land areas that they have chosen are otherwise arbitrary.

"Because municipalities are so reliant on the property tax base to raise our revenues to fund local programs and services, we could be faced with spiralling tax increases." Whitchurch-Stouffville goes on to say, "If rural areas are to be forever green for the benefit of the urban population to the south, they should be financially rewarded by the outlying communities."

So if the greenbelt area is to be a jewel, a treasure—and hopefully it will become that at the end of the day—for the province as a whole, not simply those who happen to live in it, part of the cost should be born by the province as a whole to help these municipalities, to help continue their growth, whether it's through the CRF or other measures. Yet still no answer or even genuine concern or a plan that have I heard brought forward from the government.

Third, they've slammed the brakes on important infrastructure investments. The mid-peninsula corridor stands out as one. The minister today in his remarks said, "These should be better addressed under other initiatives." They're asking us to have faith, to trust that eventually answers will come forward.

Well, far be it from me to say, but we don't always trust what Dalton McGuinty and his cabinet ministers have to say. I think it's a fair request from municipalities, farmers and businesses, that these answers should have come forward apace with this legislation, or beforehand. The cart is so far ahead of the horse it's going to lap it.

So why did these answers come forward at the same time? I expect that the growth management strategy will try to address these issues at the same time. But you have had, Minister, six or seven months since you introduced this legislation—and still no answers for the farmers, municipalities, businesses, for those people depending on

the infrastructure investment. I think it's fair that those answers come forward before you ask us to vote for third and final reading of this bill.

I know my colleague from Renfrew is looking forward to addressing this legislation, but in a nutshell, I think it's irresponsible of this government to bring this bill forward because of the harm that it's causing without bringing forward a more comprehensive approach that answers the questions that I have earlier addressed for farmers, municipalities, small businesses and local taxpayers.

The minister said, "Well, we're going to work with Simcoe to manage the growth," in response to question period today. But if they had addressed this in a comprehensive manner, they could address that same question as they addressed those caught up in the greenbelt area. At the end of the day, this is a half measure, accomplishing little, but imposing significant hardship. It has delayed projects, businesses, jobs and infrastructure. It's harming farmers and causing price spikes on available land.

I believe this is symptomatic of the leadership of Premier McGuinty: a wandering focus, an incomplete policy vision, paleness, baldness, weak-kneed, grasping, bumper-sticker sloganeering, rather than a well-thought-out vision of growth management in the province of Ontario. This pallid and incomplete growth management plan should be rejected by this Legislature.

1750

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr John Yakubuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, for the opportunity once again to speak to Bill 27.

Interjections.

Mr Yakubuski: Sorry about that.

One of the problems with this bill, and it has many of them, is that again—and we've seen it in so many pieces of legislation that this new government has brought in, whether it be the Oak Ridges moraine or the Adams mine—what we see here at work is the Big Brother syndrome: We know better.

We saw that in the budget, where the Premier has gotten up repeatedly and said, "We know that some of these measures are not popular, but we're doing the right thing. We're doing what's best for you. We're doing what's best for the people of the province of Ontario."

One of the problems the people have with that is that they would like to have some input into what is best for the people of Ontario, and Bill 27 is no exception. One of the things I'm most concerned about—again, I talk about the Big Brother syndrome—is the lack of respect for private property rights in this bill.

It would appear that the government has a great deal of concern—and rightfully so. I support them on that. We do need to protect our green space in the province of Ontario. But what they exhibit or purport to exhibit is a great deal of concern for farmland; they show little regard for farmers.

If you're in a situation where you own farm property and you've decided you're going to retain that—you

decided a couple years ago that you're going to farm for another five years and you're within the scope of this bill or the geographic area that it encompasses. You decided a few years back you're going to farm for a few more years because your children do not want to farm. They've moved on to other careers. You've watched your neighbours sell their land at very lucrative prices to people who are developing land in other ways and now you're shut out because the government is going to say, "No, you can't do that. We're going to be preserving that land. You can't sell that. The developers can't develop it, so you can't sell it. You can't make that capital gain on your investment in order to support your family and have a good retirement yourself."

That's one of the cruxes of the problems in the legislation. But again, I say it's all about the Big Brother syndrome, Adams mine, where they just went in and took the feet right out from the under the legal rights of people to have any kind of redress with regard to the government's decisions.

The big picture is, what is the next step? That's my biggest fear. The people in my riding of Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke have a strong organization of 1,700 members called the Renfrew County Private Landowners Association. They're concerned about private property rights. They're concerned about governments who want to come in and tell them what to do on their property. Day in, day out, they're the best managers of the land that exists, but the government's going to come in and tell them how to manage their property. They resent that because this land has been in their families for generations, some of it the original lots that were given to their ancestors when they came to this country. They have a great deal of pride in the property, a great deal of pride in the land. This is where they started. This is what they were given as their first stake, and they consider it to be their real legacy in this country.

So when governments start coming in and telling them how they're going to conduct themselves on their own land, they feel very, very cheated, because they've been the marvellous stewards of that land for decades and centuries. Now the government says, "We know better than you do what to do with this land."

We see it in a number of other pieces of legislation that this government has brought in. I look at the Minister of Natural Resources and say, why did you not stand up and bring back that spring bear hunt? We're already having problems as a result of that failure to reinstitute the spring bear hunt. We're having animals being attacked by bears. We're having conflicts between humans and bears. I'm very hopeful that this year we don't have a bad berry crop, because if we do, we're going to have some serious issues with regard to bear-human conflicts.

Bill 27 is the typical approach of this government. Right from day one on October 2, they have taken the attitude that they've got all the answers, and the people really don't. The people really don't understand what's in their own best interests, so we the government are going to make all those decisions for you.

I tell you, that is not the right way to do it, but it permeates everything that they do. It goes right to their budget. The Premier promised no tax cuts. The Premier promised balanced budgets. The Premier promised a referendum, if he was going to raise taxes, but he's decided now that he knows better. The people don't. We're going to go ahead without it.

The Deputy Speaker: According to the motion passed earlier today, I'm to interrupt the proceedings now. Mr Gerretsen has moved third reading of Bill 27, An Act to establish a greenbelt study area and to amend the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act, 2001. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: The appropriate paper has been filed by the chief government whip. The vote is deferred.

It being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 6:45 of the clock this evening.

The House adjourned at 1758.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

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TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Mercredi 23 juin 2004

PREMIÈRE LECTURE

Loi de 2004 sur la déclaration obligatoire des blessures par balle, projet de loi 110, <i>M. Kwinter</i>	
Adoptée.....	3174
Loi de 2004 sur la Semaine commémorative des génocides, projet de loi 111, <i>M. Dunlop</i>	
Adoptée.....	3174
Loi de 2004 destituant un membre de la Commission de services policiers de Toronto, projet de loi 112, <i>Mme Churley</i>	
Adoptée.....	3174
Loi de 2004 sur le patrimoine asiatique, projet de loi 113, <i>M. Wong</i>	
Adoptée.....	3174

DEUXIÈME LECTURE

Loi de 2004 sur la révision provisoire des paiements d'honoraires de médecins, projet de loi 104, <i>M. Smitherman</i>	
Adoptée.....	3175

TROISIÈME LECTURE

Loi de 2004 sur la révision provisoire des paiements d'honoraires de médecins, projet de loi 104, <i>M. Smitherman</i>	
Adoptée.....	3175
Loi de 2004 sur la protection de la ceinture de verdure, projet de loi 27, <i>M. Gerretsen</i>	
Vote différé.....	3209

AUTRES TRAVAUX

Visiteurs	
<i>M. Bisson</i>	3176

CONTENTS

Wednesday 23 June 2004

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Ontario Provincial Police Auxiliary	
Mr Dunlop	3171
HMCS Haida	
Ms Horwath	3171
Eric Silk	
Mr Dhillon	3171
Control of smoking	
Mr Barrett	3172
Stelco	
Ms Mossop	3172
Federal election	
Mr Runciman	3172
Family health teams	
Mr Crozier	3172
Public health	
Mr Berardinetti	3173
Health care	
Mr Duguid	3173

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

Standing committee on government agencies	
The Speaker	3173
Report deemed adopted	3173

FIRST READINGS

Mandatory Gunshot Reporting Act, 2004, Bill 110, Mr Kwinter	
Agreed to	3174
Genocide Memorial Week Act, 2004, Bill 111, Mr Dunlop	
Agreed to	3174
Mr Dunlop	3174
Removing a Member from the Toronto Police Services Board Act, 2004, Bill 112, Ms Churley	
Agreed to	3174
Ms Churley	3174
Asian Heritage Act, 2004, Bill 113, Mr Wong	
Agreed to	3174
Mr Wong	3174

MOTIONS

House sittings	
Mr Duncan	3174
Agreed to	3175

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

Reporting of gunshot wounds	
Mr Kwinter	3175
Mr Dunlop	3177
Mr Kormos	3177

Water quality

Mrs Dombrowsky	3176
Mr Barrett	3177
Ms Churley	3178

ORAL QUESTIONS

Cancer treatment

Mr Jackson	3178
Mr Smitherman	3179

Child pornography

Mr Dunlop	3180
Mr Bryant	3180

Health care

Mr Hampton	3180
Mr Smitherman	3181

West Nile virus

Mr Hampton	3181
Mr Smitherman	3181

Court ruling

Mr Runciman	3182
Mr Bryant	3182

Chiropractic services

Ms Martel	3183
Mr Smitherman	3183

Affordable housing

Mr Craitor	3183
Mr Caplan	3183

Abattoirs

Mr Hardeman	3184
Mr Peters	3184

Walkerton tragedy

Ms Churley	3184
Mr Bryant	3185

SARS

Ms Broten	3185
Mr Smitherman	3185

Municipal infrastructure

Mr Yakabuski	3186
Mr Caplan	3186
Mr Hardeman	3186

Labour dispute

Mr Kormos	3186
Mrs Bountrogianni	3187

Services for the disabled

Mr Qaadri	3187
Ms Pupatello	3187

Assistance to farmers

Mr Hudak	3187
Mr Gerretsen	3188

Education funding

Mr Marchese	3188
Mr Kennedy	3188

PETITIONS

Chiropractic services

Mr Prue	3188
Ms Horwath	3189
Mr Hardeman	3189
Mr Craitor	3190
Mr Qaadri	3190
Mr Yakabuski	3190
Ms Martel	3191
Mr Ramal	3191

School facilities

Mr Ramal	3189
----------------	------

Property taxation

Mr McNeely	3189
------------------	------

Optometrists

Mr Marchese	3189
-------------------	------

Water quality

Mr Dunlop	3190
-----------------	------

OHIP office

Mr Marchese	3190
-------------------	------

GO Transit service

Mr Delaney	3191
------------------	------

SECOND READINGS

Transitional Physician Payment

Review Act, 2004, Bill 104,	
<i>Mr Smitherman</i>	
Agreed to	3175

THIRD READINGS

Transitional Physician Payment

Review Act, 2004, Bill 104,	
<i>Mr Smitherman</i>	
Agreed to	3175

Greenbelt Protection Act, 2004,

<i>Bill 27, Mr Gerretsen</i>	
Mr Gerretsen	3192
Mrs Van Bommel	3194
Ms Churley	3197
Mr Barrett	3204
Mr Hudak	3207
Mr Yakabuski	3208
Vote deferred	3209

OTHER BUSINESS

Members' expenditures

The Speaker	3173
-------------------	------

Visitors

The Speaker	3173, 3178
Mrs Sandals	3174
Mrs Meilleur	3176
Mr Bisson	3176
Mr Dhillon	3177

Continued overleaf



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of Ontario**

First Session, 38th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 38^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 23 June 2004

Mercredi 23 juin 2004

Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 23 June 2004

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 23 juin 2004

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ELECTION STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LES ÉLECTIONS

Resuming the debate adjourned on June 14, 2004, on the motion for second reading of Bill 86, An Act to amend the Election Act, the Election Finances Act, the Legislative Assembly Act and the Representation Act, 1996 to provide for provincial general elections at intervals of approximately four years, to govern the timing of writs, close of nominations and polling day, to make modifications relating to the electoral readjustment process, and to make technical amendments / *Projet de loi 86, Loi modifiant la Loi électorale, la Loi sur le financement des élections, la Loi sur l'Assemblée législative et la Loi de 1996 sur la représentation électorale en vue de prévoir la tenue des élections générales provinciales à intervalles d'environ quatre ans, de régir le calendrier relatif à l'émission des décrets, à la clôture du dépôt des déclarations de candidature et au jour du scrutin, et d'apporter des modifications au processus de révision électorale ainsi que des modifications de forme.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr Ted Arnott): Further debate on this bill. I understand the New Democrats are next in rotation.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I will be pleased to speak to the bill, albeit for only 20 minutes. My apologies to folks. It wasn't my idea to be abbreviated so severely, but I'm going to do my best. I'm going to do my best, Mr Duncan, in 20 minutes.

I think one of the first observations to make is that we've got section 1 and section 2. I indicate once again that section 2 of this bill is not contentious. I suppose some might call it housekeeping. Were section 2 to be severed from the bill, I suspect it could be passed on second and third reading without any significant or further amount of debate. It would accommodate all three political parties and their riding associations, which have to adapt to the new riding boundaries, so as to provide consistency with the federal riding boundaries, and now the addition of—what—one, two, three new federal boundaries. So I'm interested in seeing whether the gov-

ernment is going to take up the offer to sever section 2 and have it passed in short order.

The problem is—and there may well be some anxiety—that I don't think anybody in good faith wants to see section 1, which is the part of the bill that, oh, the author of the bill, when he introduced it, spoke to as constituting the real electoral reform. It is the part of the bill that warrants significant debate and, quite frankly, committee hearings, and about which there is some disagreement. So I leave that with you, hoping that the government House leader has heeded the offer put to him.

Section 1 of the bill has got to go to committee. Section 1 of the bill is the one—you see, part of my concern is that somehow the government here thinks and talks as if it has somehow recreated the wheel about creating a four-year term. In fact, when I was reading some stuff just the other day, we had four-year terms back in the 1800s. There was reconsideration of four-year terms, and there were five-year terms. Five-year terms are the terms we have been living with for a good chunk of time now; for, as I understand it, well over a century. You see, we already have fixed terms of five years. This government wants to replace them with fixed terms of four years.

Now I appreciate that the fixed terms of five years don't necessarily indicate or mean that an election date is going to be on the same date every five years, or four years, or dare I say it, the Liberals in 1990, every three and a half years. There was a price to be paid, wasn't there, for calling an election too early, just as there are prices to be paid for calling an election a little bit too late, I remember in 1995, as well, and in 1999, it seems to me, where there might have been some delay on the part of a Premier in going to the polls.

1850

I'm concerned, as is my caucus. You heard Marilyn Churley speak to this bill. The fact that, this is it? This is this government's electoral reform? This is their government's renewal of democracy? This is it? Surely you don't address this stuff piecemeal. Surely the Liberal government has more input, more access to creative minds. I'm not talking about within the caucus. I'm talking about people for hire. I'm talking about people who can be consulted. I'm talking about people who can be retained. I'm talking about people who are constitutional experts.

Ms Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek): Go on junkets?

Mr Kormos: Ms Mossop suggests we send her on a junket to consult with these people. I suppose she's going to have to wait her turn like the rest of her caucus. She's a member of the Quebec-Ontario Parliamentary Association, the sole purpose of which is to organize junkets. Regrettably she didn't get herself elected vice-president, which is the key. That's what unlocks the door. That's the Yale, as in Yale lock, the junket.

You don't need to do junkets. You've got expertise right here in the province of Ontario. You've got academic expertise, authors and historians. You've got people who want to talk about this who are prepared to come right here to Queen's Park. They'll sit at your doorstep, knocking on your door, talking about your pathetic electoral reform, which adopts an Americanized version of fixed election dates, and somehow fails to understand the incredible quality of the British parliamentary system, our parliamentary system, which permits a government to relinquish its mandate, or provides that a government can have its mandate seized from it.

See, that doesn't happen in a fixed election date, four-year term. I took a close look at section 1, in particular 9(1), which is the amended part of the Election Act. I think it's one that begs the question, because it says: "Nothing in this section affects the powers of the Lieutenant Governor, including the power to dissolve the Legislature, by proclamation in Her Majesty's name, when the Lieutenant Governor sees fit."

I've already had everything from soup to nuts in terms of what that means. There are some who have interpreted that as meaning nothing has really changed in terms of a government's ability to relinquish its mandate, a government's ability to lose its mandate by virtue of the loss of a vote of non-confidence, although of course there's some serious concern about what constitutes a vote of non-confidence. One would think that in the context of this purported electoral reform there might have been a definition of non-confidence. Increasingly, governments have taken non-confidence to mean exactly whatever the government wants it to mean at that particular point in time.

I recall, and Mr Sterling will recall because he's a little older than I am, a federal incident wherein the federal Liberal government lost a true vote of non-confidence. They didn't have members in the House, perhaps a night similar to this night for the government here. To rectify that, rather than of course going to the Governor General and asking the Governor General to drop the writ, the government the next day simply called in its members, presented a motion of confidence, and cleaned up the vote of non-confidence that had occurred.

There's concern on the part of a whole lot of people that in the context of the overall bill, with fixed election dates, that the power of the Lieutenant Governor, purportedly retained in what will become section 9(1) of the Election Act, is circumscribed by the requirement that there be four-year fixed terms, and that those four-year terms expire so that an election can be held on a given date, the same date, every four years.

Now that's a serious abandonment of one of the significant qualities of the parliamentary system. In the American presidential system, of course, there are four-year fixed terms, but don't forget you have elections in the United States, Congressional and Senate elections, every two years. A President who doesn't have the support of the two Houses can, in two year's time, go to the electorate and appeal for that support by calling upon voters of the United States to elect senators or congresspeople of the political ilk that's necessary to give that President, that executive, the power to adequately govern.

Similarly, the voters can take away from a president, can take away from the executive, the mandate that might have been provided them with the election of a Senate or a Congress that supported that president in the course of those two-year elections, mid-presidential term. Similarly, a President, of course, can use his or her veto power, but at the risk of the wrath of the public. Similarly, a President can survive if the positions held by the President, although not supported by Congress and Senate, are sufficiently popular to warrant maintenance of popular support for that President.

One of the remarkable things, of course, and the distinction in the American system and the Canadian system, is that in the Canadian system, the government consists—the executive, the cabinet, consists of elected members, whereas in the United States, the government, the executive office, but for the President, doesn't consist of elected members. It is people who are chosen, who are acquired, who are brought on board and accountable only to the President, not accountable to the people in terms of holding elected office and being at risk of being defeated in a subsequent election.

So I appreciate that the concept, the proposal, the proposition around fixed election dates has, oh, some instant approval out there. Somehow people see it as something of a panacea, especially when there has been a critique of the manner in which governments supposedly manipulate election dates to their advantage.

Well, I watched a government try to manipulate the election date to its advantage in 1990. Remember that one, Speaker? It didn't work. I watched a government try to manipulate the election date in 1995 by holding on, holding on, holding on, thinking that somehow things would get better by waiting just one more month. It didn't work. I watched a government in 1999 try to manipulate an election date by holding on, holding on, holding on, hoping that the bad taste surrounding a budget that was presented outside of the Parliament would somehow lose its spin out there, that somehow people would fatigue of the—

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): In 2003.

Mr Kormos: In 2003. Did I say 1999?

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): You said 1999, yes.

Mr Kormos: Well, the record will be corrected appropriately. As a matter of fact, the wonderful person

from Hansard, who works so hard and who is a true servant of this House, is correcting it right now, and I want to express my gratitude to her. I hope she's getting at least overtime pay for being here after 6 o'clock in the evening, but from the cynical look on her face, I'm concerned that that indeed isn't the case, that she's going to be offered something like time off "in lieu of." I apologize to her in advance for having to work into the night.

Mind you, of course, it's consistent with the theme of this government. Remember the bill last night, 13-hour workdays and 60-hour-plus workweeks? That's what this government's response is in terms of addressing the repeal of the 60-hour—the government did repeal the 60-hour workweek and it introduced the 91-hour workweek. Seven days times 13 hours a day: That's 91 hours. Well, it did. This government is going to repeal the 60-hour workweek and replace it with a 70- or 75-hour workweek. That's the net impact of its legislation. The Tories were kinder to working folks than the Liberals.

Mrs Carol Mitchell (Huron-Bruce): We heard all that last night, Peter.

Mr Kormos: Well, the Tories were. I mean, it's remarkable. What a standard to have yourself tested against. What a standard. I remember when the Liberals were over here and they railed against the Tories for trying to force legislation through the chamber with time allocation. What happens? We've got a Liberal government that in such short order after getting elected exploits the standing orders that permit it to move time allocation motions. Why, at one point there was even a program motion that had the collaboration of the Conservatives in an effort to accelerate legislation through the House. The Conservatives got drawn into the process of curtailing debate.

I'm kind of interested and looking forward to seeing the Conservative participation in the debate this evening. I'm looking forward to hearing Conservative members of the opposition stand up and explain whether they're for or against Bill 86. I'm looking forward because we've got—heck, it's only 7 o'clock now. I've got six minutes and change. We've got a couple of hours. There will be time for lots of Conservatives to speak to the bill. There will be time for lots of Liberals to speak to the bill. There will be time for New Democrats. Rosario Marchese will be speaking to the bill; Howard Hampton will be speaking to the bill. There will be time to hear from all three parties in this Legislature, to hear their position on Bill 86.

1900

If you want to talk about manipulating election dates, I'd like to hear from government members as to why we haven't seen the democratic reform that was promised during the course of the election. I know the answer. I mean, look, all sorts of promises were made by the Liberals. Jeez, they promised not to increase taxes; Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals promised not to increase taxes. Well, that promise was broken so fast it made your head spin. That promise was broken in the proverbial New York minute. The Liberals promised to

uphold and maintain public health care. Well, gosh, Liberals responded to that promise by privatizing chiropractic care, by privatizing physiotherapy, by privatizing optometrists and the health care they provide.

I am not even sure, even if this bill passes—and I say to you, this bill requires extensive and thorough public hearings. As a matter of fact, quite frankly, once we—and I hope we can deal with section 2 of the bill separate and apart, as a severed portion of the bill which will address the housekeeping needs of riding associations for all political parties, quite frankly, not just the three parties in the Legislature, but for all political parties. I'm not sure that the remnant of the bill, section 1, should survive at all. I would far sooner see it appear in a broad-based proposal, a legislative proposal around electoral reform. I would far sooner see the prospect of tinkering with election dates made concurrent with proportional representation here in the province of Ontario. I would far sooner see the Liberals keep their promise to implement real democratic renewal and electoral reform by ensuring Ontarians that every voter's vote is going to count in the next provincial election.

I, quite frankly, am looking forward to Jack Layton and the NDP holding the balance of power in Ottawa, and hoping that Jack Layton and the however many—50, 60—New Democrats who are sent to Ottawa by voters across Ontario, voters like the folks down in Hamilton Centre who are voting for David Christopherson, voters like the ones who are voting for Tony DePaulo down there, the ones who are voting for Chris Charlton, like voters who are voting for Peggy Nash over in High Park here in Toronto, like voters who are voting for Olivia Chow in Trinity-Spadina, like voters voting for Jack Layton in Toronto-Danforth, like voters voting for Sid Ryan and electing him and sending him to Ottawa—a strong, powerful voice for working women and men, for Canadian families, for seniors, for students. Sid Ryan: What a presence he is going to have in Ottawa; what a voice he is going to be. What a voice he's going to be for working women and men and their parents and their kids up there on Parliament Hill. In fact, all the Lakeshore ridings, I'm told—Peter Tabuns is kicking electoral butt down in Michael Prue's riding, and that specifically is Beaches-East York. And then up in Ottawa, you've got Ed Broadbent. Have you seen Ed's rap video? Because if you go to—

The Acting Speaker: How does this relate to the bill we are discussing?

Mr Kormos: If we're going to talk about electoral reform, we've got to talk about elections, don't we, Speaker? And if we're going to talk about elections, we've got to talk about the real personalities who are running in those elections. If we are going to talk about electoral reform, we've got to talk—

Hon Joseph Cordiano (Minister of Economic Development and Trade): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I really think the member opposite should stop daydreaming and stick to the main theme of this bill. These are daydreams, wishful thinking on the part of the

NDP, and I think he really should stick to the subject matter.

Mr Hampton: On the same point, Mr Speaker: The member for Niagara Centre has already referred to the American political system and the attempt here by the government to import some American political style into Canada, yet the government members take offence when we refer to the Canadian political system and Parliament Hill. If we can talk about the American political system, it seems to me we should be able to talk about the Canadian—

The Acting Speaker: I would once again ask the member for Niagara Centre to continue to speak to the bill, Bill 86.

Mr Kormos: Thank you kindly, Speaker. If you haven't seen Ed Broadbent rap, go to www.ndp.ca and you watch the Ed Broadbent rap. Ed Broadbent has this incredible rap—

Mr Hampton: Ed's back.

Mr Kormos: Ed's back. Not only is Ed rapping up that riding, but Ed is going to wrap up that election. Ed raps his way into the hearts of every person who has ever listened to good rap. To think that a man of his age, somebody over 50, could pull that off, I think is just fascinating.

As I say, I'm looking forward to Jack Layton and the New Democrats in Ottawa influencing the next government and calling upon them to implement proportional representation.

I put to this government that if they're going to talk about electoral reform, if they're going to talk about democratic renewal, then it's time for them to put their money where their mouths are. It's time for them to perhaps keep one promise and bring forward legislation that talks meaningfully about things like proportional representation. That's what Ontarians want to hear about. That's what they want to hear and see day to day here in their Legislature.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments.

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): I have been listening very carefully to the wonderful rendition from the member for Niagara Centre with respect to political reform. Indeed, there was some rendering with respect to the bill that has been introduced in the House as part of the platform of Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals during the last election. Here we are with the full intent of carrying through with that promise. We are debating Bill 86, which deals indeed with reform for perhaps the first time in many years.

The core of the reform is establishing a date and time, letting the people of Ontario know when the next election date is going to be. The bill contains more than that. It contains other amendments with respect to election reform, financial reform, but the main core of Bill 86 deals with letting the people of Ontario know when they will be facing the next election. In this case, it will be October 4, 2007. There is some flexibility in the bill for eventualities as well, but at least the reorganization, the readjustments will all be included so there is no more

hanky-panky being played by the leaders of the various political parties when it's most convenient for them to call the election. The people of Ontario can be prepared. They can prepare themselves and say, "Well, three years from now, four years from now, we're going to be going to the polls and we're going to re-elect the government," and it's going to be a Liberal government four years from now, because we will be doing exactly what's important and what's important to the people of Ontario. It's what we have been saying all along. This is one of those promises that will be kept by the Liberal government.

Mr Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): Bill 86 is essentially just a promise to hold an election on October 4, 2007. There's no legal penalty if the Premier doesn't do it. The Premier clearly has powers to hold the election either before or after that time.

This bill is simple. It puts forward that concept. It puts forward the concept of keeping constituency associations that now exist in place until December 31, 2006. This bill does not need committee hearings; it needs to be voted on. Let's get on with other business which is more important to this House.

1910

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I'm glad to participate in making comments on the remarks from the member for Niagara Centre in regard to this particular bill. I just want to say, because it's the first chance I've had to say anything on this bill on this particular issue, that there are a couple of things in this bill that I think we need to put into context. I don't personally not support the idea of fixed-date elections; I think that's a good idea. But I am not convinced that we have figured it out right, by way of this bill, about which particular time of the year an election should be held in.

If the goal is to increase voter participation in order to make sure that you have more and more people who come out to vote each time, is having an election the first Thursday in October the smartest time to do it? You're going to have a Jewish holiday in September in the middle of a writ, which quite frankly is problematic for the Jewish community. You're going to have the issue of how you are going to deal with students who are in college and university, who are away from home. Are we going to allow them to vote on campus within their own ridings? Are we going to allow them to vote, as they do now, by way of proxy in their own communities?

In my view, we need to send that particular part of the bill to committee so that we can hear people who have pretty good ideas on this particular issue so that we get it right, because we're going to be setting in legislation, if this bill is agreed to, to set in motion an election every four years in October, which is going to impact, every third election, on municipal elections that are going to happen in November.

The point is, I'm not opposed to the concept, but we need to get that bill to committee in order to have people come in and present and talk about: when the best time is to have fixed elections; how you deal with the issue of a government losing confidence in the House when you

have a fixed election date; and how you deal with election finance as it impacts on the election date, so that we get it right. That's the point I would like to make, and I look forward to this bill going to committee.

Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough): For those folks in Peterborough who might be watching this evening, I'll encourage them to get out and vote for Mr Adams on June 28, who has been our member since 1993—a great member since 1993.

Interjection: Should be re-elected.

Mr Leal: Should be re-elected. But I'll get back to Bill 86. When I look at Bill 86, I think it's an important step to starting democratic renewal in the province of Ontario, and I think it's something that when you chat—for example, the people in the barber shop on Monaghan Road in Peterborough, Ontario, are interested in seeing our system, to look at it in a new light and bring some new innovations to the democratic process of the province of Ontario. I happen to think the fixed-date election is the first step to move down that road. As a person who spent some 18 years in municipal politics, I got very used to a fixed-date election every three years in November, and it always worked out extremely well. Everybody knew when the election was coming, the candidates knew when to start to prepare, and I see it no different as part of this process.

I'm particularly pleased that our colleague the member from Sarnia, who is the parliamentary assistant to the Attorney General, Ms Di Cocco, is very knowledgeable in this area and has explored a lot of areas of different Parliaments around the world to look at other ways that we can fundamentally reform our institutions here and our process of government and how elections are held.

We must remind everybody that we are in the 21st century and it's time to look at some new approaches. I know in our campaign platform we certainly talked about citizen juries as another step to fully implement and to engage the population in the democratic process.

Just today, I had the opportunity of being in St Peter's high school in Peterborough, and young people are interested in discovering—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. The member for Niagara Centre has two minutes to reply.

Mr Kormos: I regret that I had but 20 minutes to speak to this bill. It's a good thing other New Democrats are here to carry on the debate throughout the night. Once again, I'm looking forward to hearing what the Conservatives have to say about it; looking forward to hearing what Liberal backbenchers have to say about it in the course of the 20-minute slots allotted them.

I just want to make an observation: People are pretty cranky here in the House tonight. People are a little touchy. Some of them are even downright whiny. I don't mean "winey," even though that may be the case with a few who had supper either in or out of the assembly building, but "whiny." These people—you'd think they'd been here for four years. They've only been here for nine months. Nine months, 9% in the polls: I guess there's

some consistency. So in nine more months, does that mean they'll be at 0%? I don't know.

My impression is that the parliamentary calendar suggests that we're going to leave here after tomorrow night. Look, New Democrats are eager to sit here next week if we have to, the week after, the week after that. If this government wants to keep having question periods, by God, it can keep having sessional days, and we'll be eager to debate this bill, Bill 86. We'll be eager to debate things like, oh, the family medical leave bill, or we'll debate the bring-your-own-wine bill. We'll debate any bill the government—you see, the government controls its agenda. Opposition members don't get to call legislation. It's the government, the House leader and the whip who decide what legislation is going to be called and what legislation is going to be debated. So let the government bring it on. We'll debate it.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mrs Liz Sandals (Guelph-Wellington): I'm pleased to rise tonight and speak in favour of Bill 86, the democratic renewal bill. This is one of many steps in our democratic renewal platform. This bill, if passed, will fix the election date in an attempt to give voters some sense, some stability in the election system and to encourage more people to vote.

As the member previous had mentioned, this is not our whole democratic renewal program; this is just one part of our democratic renewal program. We in fact have already begun with a previous bill, which is to get rid of the shameful waste of government money on partisan advertising. We have previously tabled a bill which will be removing the right of government to spend money on partisan advertising. As we go along, the minister responsible for democratic renewal will be tabling a number of other bills as part of the democratic renewal process.

But let's talk about this particular bill, which has to do with fixed election dates. If this bill is passed, the provincial election will be held on the first Thursday in October every fourth year, which means, for those voters out there who are listening, that if they have a multi-year calendar, they can go and mark on it right now that the next election will be held on Thursday, October 4, 2007. The significance of this is that politicians, the Premier, will no longer be able to play games with the election date. As we've seen over a number of years, Premiers do in fact play games with the public and with the political process in trying to choose an election date to their best advantage. We're fixing this election date so that the election will be at the convenience of the public, not at the convenience of the Premier, whoever that Premier might happen to be.

Now, it does a few other things as well. Under the current legislation, the campaign can be anywhere from 28 to 56 days in length—again, totally at the call of the Premier. So if the Premier thinks it would be good to have a short campaign, it's the Premier's call; if the Premier thinks it would be good to have a long campaign, currently it's the Premier's call. We're going to change that. The campaign will be fixed at 28 days—four weeks.

We all know right now what the length of the next campaign will be.

One of the members who spoke previously raised a concern that it is possible that an election date in early October could conflict with religious holidays. That has already been taken care of within the language of the bill. We have anticipated that, depending on how the calendar falls, this could be a problem. So we have given the Lieutenant Governor the ability within the bill to move that election day within a week, one way or the other, to accommodate any potential conflict with religious holidays. So, indeed, we have already taken care of that problem.

1920

Another concern which I have heard from constituents, which I think is a legitimate concern, is: What happens if you have a minority government situation and the government falls? Does that mean that minority governments would be locked in for four years? The answer to that is no; absolutely not.

We have considered that eventuality within the bill. So, contrary to the information that the previous speaker from Niagara Centre may have confused voters with, I would like voters to know that if there is a minority government and that minority government loses the confidence of the House, two things could happen.

First of all, the Lieutenant Governor may ask another party to form the government, or the Lieutenant Governor may choose to call an election. That is no change from the current situation. So the whole tradition around minority governments and loss of confidence remains totally unchanged.

What will change is if there is an election outside this schedule because a minority government has fallen, and we've taken care of that. The next election date will be four years after that unscheduled, if I can put it that way, election. So that eventuality has been taken care of.

What about student voters? One of the previous speakers also raised the issue of student voters. I happen to live in a university town. We did have a campaign during September. I would venture to guess that as the campaign took off on campus, as we held an all-candidates meeting on campus, more student voters engaged with the process; more students were enumerated, signed up and did vote in my riding. So that's a non-issue. We've all—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Will the member for Guelph-Wellington please take your seat. I'd like to ask the members for Peterborough and Simcoe North and the Minister of Economic Development, if they want to have a conversation, to take it into one of the lobbies.

Mrs Sandals: Thank you, Mr Speaker. It would be very nice to hear myself think.

What about this business about fixed election dates being an American concept? If you go and read the Ontario Municipal Elections Act, you would find that municipal elections—that is, for municipal councils and school board elections—are already held every third year, on the second Monday of November. Having come

from many school board elections, I knew, when I was elected on the second Monday in November, that three years from then I would be doing it all over again. I have to tell you that that was—

Interjection: Not next time.

Mrs Sandals: Not next time—but every time I did actually run for school board, I was elected, OK? It happened every three years. It worked quite well.

There has been a bit of fearmongering around this, that somehow this creates a permanent election campaign. What tends to happen is in the spring, around May or June, preceding the election campaign, people start to talk about whether they'll run again. They would file their papers in September. There would be a two- or three-month period during which people geared up to campaign, but this was no more than a six-month process in terms of disrupting the life of the body.

I'd like to compare that to what happened to me, personally, in this last election. Remember, the date of the last election was October 2, 2003. But we did have a change of Premier in there. In the previous government, the leader decided that perhaps he was a little bit on unsafe territory and he resigned. The governing party had to elect a new leader, a new Premier. My riding association happened to decide that perhaps the Premier, exercising his authority under the old scheme, might decide to hold a snap election right after the leadership convention. So they decided to have an early nomination meeting.

What happened to me was that in December of 2001, I had to make the decision about whether or not to go for the nomination, put together a nomination team. I announced I was going for the nomination in January 2002. I won the nomination in May 2002. I spent the summer of 2002 putting together a campaign team. I started knocking on doors in the fall of 2002. I would like to thank Mr Eves for that, because having spent a year knocking on doors put me in very good shape when the campaign came along. In fact, my election campaign was 22 months long, which is quite silly. It worked; I have no complaints; but this really is not a good way in which to run an election campaign—trying to outguess the Premier.

What we will do is introduce some stability into this whole process. Everybody will know that elections, henceforth, are on a four-year cycle. We can get rid of the nonsense. The public knows; Elections Ontario, which has to orchestrate this whole thing, will know; and we can get on with the business of concentrating on the government of the province rather than playing politics.

I would now like to share of the rest of my time with the member from Etobicoke-Lakeshore.

Ms Laurel C. Broten (Etobicoke-Lakeshore): I'm very pleased to stand tonight and give my support to Bill 86, the Election Statute Law Amendment Act. As my friends before me have said, this legislation, if passed, is about something that may seem simple. It's about setting an election date for the first Thursday every four years, starting October 4, 2007, which will be four years and a day from October 2, 2003, when this government was elected and when I was pleased to become a member of

the Legislature, representing my own community of Etobicoke-Lakeshore.

Although that may seem like something very simple, I thought I would pick up where my colleague left off, talking about her own personal circumstances and how this piece of legislation will help people, both the voters and perhaps those who may be willing to enter the democratic process and put their name forward.

If I can contrast the two experiences that I had when I ran in 1999—unsuccessfully, albeit—and in 2003, successfully—

Interjection: Training.

Ms Broten: It was good training. The one thing I can contrast about the election in 1999 was that it was more certain. There was less uncertainty with respect to the election day, and it pretty much went off like clockwork. We expected an election call for a June election. I left work on a Thursday. We had an election call exactly the day that we thought. I was able to assemble my team, rent space and, in fact, we were able to put this team together and run an election campaign for that 28-day period. As a result of knowing when the election call would be, we did not rent space for an extended period of time, we were able to book our advertising and all of those things that you put forward. Most importantly, as someone who was packing up and leaving a litigation practice, I was able to plan. I was able to work with my clients, let them know that I would be leaving on a certain day. If all went well, I wouldn't be coming back. As it turned out, I did go back to the practice, and it was very good that I was able to advise them of the process as it went along.

On the other hand, 2003 was a very different election campaign. I had been nominated as the candidate since, I think, December 2001, so the election campaign was very long indeed. I recall, in the months leading up to the election, trying to get my files in order, trying to determine what files I would transfer to someone else and how I would wrap up my law practice to get ready to run in the election. The comment that I heard from my clients, more often than not, was, "When is this election coming? What do you mean you don't know when this election will be?"

I do have many clients who are located in the US, and for them it was a very strange concept. I remember having some very long discussions with them about how our Premier could play political games with the choosing of an election date. It was very surprising to them. They said, "You mean the person who sits in government can go out there and do all sorts of polling and see where they are in the polls, and they have every right to keep everyone on pins and needles, not undertaking any business of the government but rather, on an extended pre-writ campaign, using government money to the disadvantage of other parties, wasting taxpayers' dollars with all sorts of advertising?" We certainly saw a huge flurry of advertising in the months leading up to the election. As for my clients who were distant from the process, what they simply said to me was that running an

election in that way and having it be such a political decision as to when an election will be called really keeps good people out of politics. In so many ways the sacrifices one might have to make to be in that circumstance—think if you're a parent and you're wondering, "Do I make child care arrangements for what will be a very extensive month or not?" I see my colleague across the aisle. I'm sure that what you were going to do was a very difficult decision. Some of my friends in years past actually quit their employment leading up to an election that didn't happen right away—and talk about the financial circumstances and the financial sacrifices that someone is asked to make.

1930

Through those many months of uncertainty, not uncertainty, was I leaving my law practice, was I not leaving it, was I coming back and looking for more work from my firm, I have to say, the fact that they were incredibly patient and supporting was a key factor in that process rolling out smoothly. But it took clients and a law firm that were very accommodating, because I was gone again and back again. I remember distinctly the day it became clear that we would not be having an election early in the spring, when we expected we would be. We had a campaign office up and running. We probably had about 25 people working in that campaign office because we expected the writ to drop within days. Then we got a phone call that said, "You know, the word on the street is that this election is not coming." I remember the disappointment in the volunteers who were working in the campaign, who said, "What do you mean? We're going to have more game-playing, more cynicism and politics happening as to when this election should be."

I want to point out that it's not only those individuals who are involved in a campaign, clearly trying to see a change of government, who were disappointed. It was also the voters. I remember, in those very days after the election was not coming, like a lot of my colleagues here in the Legislature, that we kept on working. Your team was in place. You kept knocking on doors and you had people saying, "What are you doing here? They're not calling the election. We can't believe it. Why has this happened? We want to see an election. How is it that a government and a Premier can make this decision? And the decision is his alone, to do what he chooses."

That was something, as we look at many ways to make sure we increase voter participation and bring back democratic renewal in this province: dealing with the issue of hampering voter cynicism. What happened in 2003, with the delay of the election, was severely increased voter cynicism. They wanted to have their say. They were ready to go to the polls and cast their ballot for whomever they were going to cast that ballot. They felt that their voice, their ability to have a say in the political process, was being tampered with, that they were being cheated and it was being lessened.

I think that this piece of legislation is significant in those few aspects. One, it's an important step in terms of our strengthening Ontario's democracy and engaging the

people of this province more in the democratic process. We absolutely must do that. We've seen the rate of turnout, of voter participation, decreasing, and particularly decreasing among young voters. That's something everyone in this Legislature, on all sides of the House, should be extremely concerned about. If our leaders of tomorrow don't turn out to vote today, we have some serious concerns about whether we're responding to their needs.

This is also part of our goal, to combine with other pieces of legislation that we're bringing forward. The ban on wasting taxpayers' dollars on partisan advertising goes hand in hand with this legislation as a significant plank in our move forward to increase democratic renewal in this province to give all of our members, whatever their responsibility in government, an opportunity to sit on the cabinet committees and have a voice. That again increases our participation.

We've heard a lot, over the last number of days, about the fact that backbenchers haven't been speaking out. I want to say that I have found those comments offensive. I know that everyone in this Legislature, everyone who is part of this government is making an impact for their communities, first and foremost; acting for their constituents; serving on the cabinet committees; has roles assisting various ministers and otherwise; and that every member of this government is having a huge impact on moving forward our plan for change in this province.

I would suggest that the comments made otherwise, as to the fact that backbenchers and other members of our government are not willing to participate, are based on much misinformation and are really made in a way to try to discredit the people who are working hard each and every day, as part of this government, to ensure that when we go back to the polls on October 4, 2007, we've delivered to the people of Ontario what they voted for on October 2, 2003, and that we will see a strong Liberal majority returned to government so that we can continue transforming this province into a place that we will all be very proud to be part of.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It's a pleasure to respond to the member from Guelph-Wellington and the member from Etobicoke-Lakeshore. I did listen with some intent.

If I look at the bill and the new section 9—it's important to put it on the record here. I will read it for the viewer, who may be interested in understanding the subtleties of this bill. We're talking about a fixed-term election process, really. Section 9 says, "The next general election will be held on Thursday, October 4, 2007 (unless a general election has been held sooner because the Lieutenant Governor has dissolved the Legislature)."

So the leader could easily go to the Lieutenant Governor and dissolve it. There's no fixed term here. There's no absolute commitment. That's what's missing here. It's a hole in the legislation. If you want to listen to our critic on this file, Norm Sterling from Lanark-Carleton—with a great deal of experience here—he has concerns about that particular section.

If I go down to section 3, I really think that this needs to be paid attention to: "The Legislative Assembly Act, which sets out the current rule that the Legislature shall continue for five years unless sooner dissolved by the Lieutenant Governor, is repealed."

So we do have a fixed term, Mr Speaker. You would know, as a great traditionalist, that, in fact, it is a five-year term today. It's the old Westminster tradition. Governments have played—there's no question, as has been said by the member from Etobicoke-Lakeshore, and it has been an issue over some time. But this is the Americanization of our British tradition. That's really what it is: It's Americanization.

There's more to be said on this particular thing, and I'll be speaking to the bill.

Interjection.

Mr O'Toole: Well, I'll be speaking next, hopefully.

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have to be honest with you. I don't think that having a fixed election date is going to change voter participation at all in provincial elections. I don't think it's going to do one thing to encourage people to go out and vote, because I don't think people vote depending on what day of the week it is, what month it is. You see, I think people aren't voting, and we see that from the statistics, for a number of reasons. The reasons they're not voting are not going to be changed by a fixed election.

Let me give you some of those reasons. They don't vote because they don't think their vote matters. In a first-past-the-post system like we have in the province of Ontario, that is very true. If we were to move to a form of proportional representation, where people clearly could see that their vote mattered, I think that would make an enormous difference in the number of people, particularly young people, who wanted to go out and cast their ballot.

Secondly, if we talk about how we're going to encourage young people to vote, we should be looking at Internet voting and how we can appeal to those young people, in particular, who use that technology and could be very engaged in the political process as a result. The bill doesn't talk about that at all.

People don't vote because, if they haven't been enumerated and they're not on the permanent voters list, they go to the polling station and find out they have to stand in line for an hour in order to register. They say, "Forget it," and they leave, and they don't exercise their vote. So we should be moving back to enumeration, and there's nothing in the bill that puts that in place.

People don't vote because they think big money buys or influences elections. Until you ban corporate and union donations and move to a system where you finance directly from individuals, people aren't going to feel that they are engaged in the political process. They aren't going to feel like their vote matters, and they aren't going to be engaged.

These are some of the things that would really renew democracy in the province. None of these things are in the bill, and I regret that.

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Ms Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West): I want to affirm the comments of my colleagues from Etobicoke-Lakeshore and Guelph-Wellington. Certainly the member for Nickel Belt has talked about what the bill doesn't do, but I think what we're talking about is what the bill does do.

It's interesting because when a bill is introduced that does too many things, there's a complaint about it not being focused, but when a bill has a very specific purpose and it's intended to do one thing and do it well, then there's a complaint about that.

I just want to affirm my experience of this past election, which was much like that of the members for Etobicoke-Lakeshore and Guelph-Wellington, in that I was campaigning from my 49th birthday in 2002, when I was nominated in May, until October 2. I was sure we would have had an election before I was 50, but we didn't.

This bill corrects an imbalance. It allows citizens to know when an election is going to be called, it will save tax dollars and it provides predictability. This makes sense to people. The games that are played by Premiers in trying to manipulate the process really are inside baseball. Citizens really don't care about that kind of game. They want us to talk about the issues up until the time the election happens and then they want to vote on the issues.

In the days of constant media, when you read every single day about whether the election is going to be called, whether it's not going to be called, whether it's going to be called, that's not of interest to people. They want to know what we stand for. That's what we should be talking about. If they know when the election is coming, then they can get ready for that.

I think it is a very good step in the right direction. It can allow us to focus on other things, and I am completely in support.

The Acting Speaker: We have time for one last question and comment. If not, one of the government members has the opportunity to reply.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: I'm sorry. No one stood up when I asked for one last question and comment. One of the government members has the opportunity to reply.

Mrs Sandals: I'd like to thank my colleagues from Etobicoke-Lakeshore, Durham, Nickel Belt and Don Valley West for their responses.

I have just a few comments here. People keep talking about the fact that we have a five-year fixed term already. We do not have a five-year fixed term. We have a variable term, which maxes out at five years. In fact, in the last several election cycles, elections have been called voluntarily at anywhere from three years to four years, four and a half years to the absolute drop-dead date at five years. So elections have been extremely variable and unpredictable.

We've heard here about addressing the issues of proportional representation and alternate voting methods, and we will be looking at that. But the difference is that

we were very specific in our election campaign, saying we will introduce a four-year, fixed-term election. We're doing that. That's why this bill is here.

Also in our campaign, we said we would have a consultation with the public on issues like proportional representation. We will also do that, and the results of that consultation will come back to the House in the future.

Just quickly, I would like to mention one other aspect, which is what variable election dates cost the public. Elections Ontario this year, in anticipation of a four-year term, opened up all the offices in 103 ridings, staffed them, rented space, rented equipment, for about four or five months. Mr Eves didn't call the election. They closed down and then they had to start up again later—a waste of money.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr O'Toole: In the very few minutes I've been allocated, I just want to cover a couple of things here on a very different piece. In fact, it's got the House stalled, actually, as far as I understand it. I'm not sure the government really wants this. They could easily move this bill. They have the power, they have the majority, and they could ram it through; there's no question about that. I think it's important to have a small bit of debate on it. Clearly our member from Lanark-Carleton is the critic and is very knowledgeable of the issues and the substance within the bill.

In one of the responses I made earlier—for those viewers who have just tuned in, it's important to point out that in the new section 9, it says: "unless a general election has been held sooner because the Lieutenant Governor has dissolved the Legislature." Well, that means the leader of the government could go to the Lieutenant Governor and just say, "We don't have the confidence of the House," which, quite honestly, they should have done during the budget. In my view, there was human outrage. The leader of the government, Mr McGuinty, plummeted in support to 9%. So clearly the people of Ontario, through direct communication with members of all parties, made it clear that they were very disappointed.

The member from Nickel Belt spoke to some extent about the voter apathy issue. The voter apathy issue could be traced simply to not telling the truth during the election. I think a precipitous slide may have started—I don't want to impute any motives here—with Trudeau, and then maybe it carried on with John Turner. It may have carried on even—I think the election that changed my mind, where I became active, was when I heard Jean Chrétien and Sheila Copps. I think of them now, walking around, waving the Canadian flag thing, the branding, and—

Hon Jim Watson (Minister of Consumer and Business Services): What about Mulroney?

Mr O'Toole: I'll get to that, too.

What they promised in that election was the beginning of the demise, the onset of public apathy. They had three key promises, as my memory serves me well. One of the promises by Chrétien was to cancel the free trade agree-

ment. The next major promise was to cancel the GST. There were others.

But another one affected me personally. It's why I became engaged. They promised, on the helicopter issue, the Sea King helicopters. At that time, my son—Mr Speaker, I've told you this story personally—was at the Royal Military College in Kingston, studying to be a pilot—in fact, a helicopter air crew person—and he was actually in England. He was on the Cormorant, the new EH101, a helicopter that had been ordered. You know what happened? During the election, they made a big deal out of that.

It's hard to phrase these words in parliamentary form, so I'll try to be careful. What desensitized me to the sincerity of elected people—prior to that, I think all parties really meant the best and responded to the realities, once elected. They responded to the realities that beset them once they got in to look at the books, inside the big documents and the various expenditures etc.

The minister from Ottawa West-Nepean, who is the Minister of Consumer and Business Services, made a comment—

Interjection: He's a good guy.

Mr O'Toole: He's a good member. As a matter of fact, he'd be much more comfortable on that side of the House, with us as government. I understand that. But here's the point: He made the point, "What about Mulroney?" Here's the difference, here's the subtlety in a simple couple of lines, if I could have your attention: The difference between Mulroney and Chrétien is Mulroney told the truth.

What happened is this—

Mr Marchese: I have a different way of putting it: The Liberals kept every promise the Tories ever made. That's a better line.

Mr O'Toole: I have to say, the member from Trinity-Spadina has just corrected me: The Liberals kept every promise that the Tories made.

Mr Marchese: Ever made.

Mr O'Toole: Now, here's the difference. The difference is simply this: How did they balance the budget? All of a sudden, how did Chrétien, and Martin as finance minister, and all this stuff come to pass?

Mr Marchese: Tell us about it.

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Mr O'Toole: Well, the small litany and the short-list litany would be this: The revenue from the GST was about \$28 billion of new revenue. Once the Liberal government, the Chrétien government, got in power, they saw that the revenue was going to be—"Holy smokes, holy gee, in a couple of years we can balance the budget." So their finance officials—I think Don Drummond was Paul Martin's assistant Deputy Minister of Finance—told him, "Look, you can't cancel the GST." He knew it all along. So they didn't cancel the GST. That's how the federal Liberal government has survived since the Mulroney government. Had it not been so—

Mr Marchese: But Sheila Copps didn't survive.

Mr O'Toole: Well, Sheila Copps is another story. She was all over the map, on all issues, at all times. Good riddance to Sheila Copps.

Mr Marchese: Sayonara.

Mr O'Toole: Well, bonjour, with her gold-plated pension at around 50 years of age.

Mr Marchese: No, she's got to be 55.

Mr O'Toole: The point is, next they looked at free trade and then they looked at the economic reality of the Canadian economy, which we know has benefited most sectors. I came from the auto sector and there's no question. Even Bob White and his predecessor, Buzz Hargrove, know it's the right thing. General Motors, where I worked for over 30 years, could build all the cars they sell in Canada in about three months. All of the production, seven days a week, 24 hours a day, goes to our friends in the United States.

I would say to you that the issues here, the two principal promises by the broken-promise Liberals, federal or provincial, are what the public cynicism is about. I've given you a couple of what I'd call navigational aids to help you through this: that you cannot trust them. I don't know how to say it more clearly. They would say anything to get elected. I'm talking anything to get elected, and do anything when they get in office.

We've seen it in Ontario. I can't believe Dalton McGuinty. I can't believe it. He cancelled about 13 houses on the Oak Ridges moraine. I can't believe the cynicism about this bill is because—

Mr Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The situation at General Motors and the member's personal opinions about the federal election notwithstanding, pursuant to standing order 22(b), I respectfully request that he address the matter under discussion.

The Acting Speaker: I think he is speaking to the bill. The member for Durham, you may continue.

Mr O'Toole: You don't want to hear the truth. There's another example, that the Liberal government doesn't want to hear the truth. It's an appetite. It's like they're anaphylactic. You know how some people are allergic to nuts? Well, they're allergic to something, and I think it verges on nuts.

Interjection.

Mr O'Toole: Well, they don't deal with the truth very carefully.

In all respect, I think I've summed up the three salient points as to why public apathy, as has been mentioned by the member from Nickel Belt, is pervasive today. We must be held accountable.

I remember the member from Lanark-Carleton spoke passionately to our caucus of how important this legislation is. I would say that the other part that is concerning me is about destroying the traditions of the Canadian parliamentary system. I'm not opposed to change by any stretch. A few members have mentioned electronic voting and other things, and all the rest of it.

In section 3—you've got to pay attention to this one because it is the slippery slope. I've heard a few people

go, "Uh-oh," because they know in their heart of hearts that this is the Americanization of our proud Westminster-British parliamentary system tradition. Fixed-term elections are what Bill Clinton stood for.

Interjection: Yay.

Mr O'Toole: Some of the Liberals are cheering about Bill Clinton; can you imagine it?

I think section 3 repeats the Legislative Assembly Act. It's just the beginning of further apathy in the Canadian parliamentary system. I said to you earlier that today—Mr Speaker, you would know—there are fixed terms. It's five years.

I could get into the minutiae, having served since 1982 in elected office—

Mr Sterling: It's too long.

Mr O'Toole: Some would say, "That's too long." I have been growing with the knowledge and experience I've gained from others, but it does speak to my age. It's not too long, because Mr Sterling has been here 26—

Mr Sterling: It's 27.

Mr O'Toole:—going on 27 years. He's still learning and still contributing to the constituents of Lanark-Carleton. He's loyal in the House. He's here every day. The whip will attest to that.

To get back on track here, the point has been made that voter apathy today—we see it federally. Paul Martin had a budget a few months ago. He had no money for health care. Surprise. Now, all of a sudden, there's an election; a few months later he has all this money. I don't know whether it's the gun registry money; I don't know whether it's the Adscam money; I don't know what money it is, but what it is is 10 years of Liberal obfuscation. How else can you say it, Mr Speaker? It's 10 years of what I'd call Enron accounting. It's 10 years of—no one knows, because they own the books. In my view, there has to be a day of reckoning, and June 28 is the day of reckoning.

What you need to do is hold Stephen Harper accountable to his election document—every single page. Just tick it off. Make sure that he delivers. It'll be difficult for him to form an alliance with any of the other groups, because Jack Layton is a good member—

Ms Judy Marsales (Hamilton West): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The honourable member is talking about the federal election. Last time I looked, we're the provincial government. I'd like to hear what he has to say about the current topic.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Durham, how does this relate to Bill 86?

Mr O'Toole: The member for Hamilton West does call me back from Canadian history. As we look at accountability and transparency, the two key words today—blah, blah, blah. It's a lot of bunk. Just simply tell the truth during the election, not 231 promises.

All I want, in the remaining years of life I have and the time to serve the people, is truth and justice in politics. It's difficult to bring to bear in this debate, but you know, there's another point here. I'm the father of five very intelligent children, and I've come to know—

Hon Mr Watson: Where did that come from, John?

Mr O'Toole: Well, my wife's a teacher, Mr Watson. Parents are the primary educators. Would you give me that?

Hon Mr Watson: She voted Liberal.

Mr O'Toole: The teachers at my wife's school, St Elizabeth school in Bowmanville, the intelligent teachers, were told today by a member from OECTA to vote NDP.

Ms Wynne: She can't make up her own mind?

Mr O'Toole: The member from Don Valley West, a former trustee, knows full well that the teachers were told to vote Liberal. And I say to them, Don Valley West, that the teachers are intelligent people. They don't need to be told. I agree, because I have a daughter, a very intelligent daughter, a high school teacher in science and history. I have five children. I would say to you that no one in this province needs to be told. In fact, I would say that Stephen Harper said one thing I fully agree with. What he said was, "You don't have to be a Liberal to be a Canadian. What you have to do is take some time to think about the issues and vote for change."

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I would say to you, on this Bill 86, in my view—I've mentioned that it's the Americanization of our traditional parliamentary system in Canada, and it's a slippery slope. In fact, if I think of the volunteers in my riding and in all of your ridings, there are a couple of sections here that are very troublesome. Section 2 says:

"Assets and liabilities

"(7) Every old constituency association that is dissolved shall transfer its assets and liabilities to one or more new registered constituency associations...."

You will find out that the small amount of money that the volunteers have contributed to your association will be redistributed.

There is another section here—the same group; that's a huge problem, let me tell you, because these volunteers work very hard for us: "The Chief Election Officer may allow an old constituency association to combine any reports and statements required to be filed...." They're all volunteers.

The expectations here from Minister Michael Bryant, under the role of minister responsible for democratic renewal—it's a very shallow, very elementary attempt, in my view. There are more substantive issues that he could deal with, and I believe that we could find some harmony in this House.

The NDP member from Niagara Centre, in his passion on this issue, has much to say. But there are a couple of points here that, just in conclusion—the very limited time that I've been asked to commit to this—was the youth vote. Members here tonight who speak—and the Hansard records do become part of the official debates of the province—need to stand and relate to youth. As I said, I have five children, ranging in age from 26 to about 32. These people are like many other young people from families across the province and across Canada: They're tired of all the false promises, and they're tired—

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: That's so very subtle.

Mr O'Toole: —of the issue.

I complete my remarks by saying that I'm always available to serve the constituents of the riding of Durham. This issue here needs further debate.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Marchese: I just want to know what the member from Durham was about to say before he got that note. He didn't get a chance to finish off his remarks. John, I have never known you not to complete all of the time allotted to you. I don't understand. I am confused by it.

Interjections.

Mr Marchese: I see. Well, there's some confusion there. All right.

I just want to congratulate the member from Durham for taking, what, approximately 18 minutes of his full 20 minutes to deliver his thoughts, ideas, objections to the bill, questions about the bill. Presumably, he wants this to go to committee, because I suspect there are a whole lot of other people who might have as many questions about this bill, if not more, than the ones he raised. He only had 20 minutes to speak.

I was so delighted today to listen to the members from Etobicoke-Lakeshore and Guelph-Wellington take their allotted time. They shared their time, but that was good.

Mrs Sandals: They work together. They're a team.

Mr Marchese: It was wonderful. They shared their time.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: Sorry? You want to speak too? That's OK. You have two minutes to speak.

There are so many members who want to speak tonight. I'm really delighted to see the fact that all of you want to stand up and do your 20 minutes to defend this bill. I think it's wonderful.

I'll be up next to speak, for those of you who are watching this parliamentary channel. In the event that you are interested to know what I have to say, in approximately five, six, seven minutes I am on, so please tune in.

In the meantime, I'm looking forward to what the member from Durham would have said had he had the other two minutes to speak. John, I was delighted with your remarks. I hope you'll tell us the secret to that two minutes of the time you didn't use.

Interjection: Durham.

Mr Marchese: The member from Durham, yeah.

Mrs Maria Van Bommel (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): At the outset of his comments, the member from Durham stated that we could have rammed this bill through. As a government, we believe that thorough debate is very important. We wouldn't want to deprive the member from Durham of his right to thorough debate and his right to speak as he sees fit. Ironically, I get the sense that the member is somehow opposed to this bill. I know that a colleague of his from Lanark-Carleton proposed a similar type of legislation several weeks ago and also wants to set a permanent, fixed date for elections.

We have a tradition of fixed dates for municipal elections. I don't consider this bill to be the Americanization

of the election process. As I stated, we already do this municipally.

The member from Guelph-Wellington stated very eloquently that a lot of time was consumed by all of us in preparing for the election. I campaigned, from the time I was nominated until the election date, for 11 months. In that time, we sowed and harvested a crop, grandchildren were conceived and born, and all kinds of things happened in my life that I would have liked to have been more available for but was not able to be there because we were campaigning.

Interjection.

Mrs Sandals: That's our point; it was a very long campaign.

Mrs Van Bommel: It was long and drawn-out. People's lives can change while we're waiting for elections.

I see this as a way of setting a date that we can plan around, that our families can plan around, that our volunteers can deal with, and I think it's very appropriate. I don't think it's anything less than parliamentary to have an election date that is set.

Hon Mr Watson: I'm delighted to speak on this particular bill. It lives up to another commitment by the McGuinty government in bringing in fixed election dates.

One of the things that I think all of us realized in the last election, even the previous government, was that it was a bit of a game of Russian roulette when the election would actually take place. That drives up costs for the taxpayer in terms of Elections Ontario offices opening and then having to close. It costs taxpayers money because money donated to a political party receives a tax credit. As someone who served three terms in municipal government, the predictability of fixed election dates was much healthier for the democratic process. Community groups, community associations could actually organize all-candidates meetings, knowing full well when the actual election was going to take place.

We are also committed, as a result of the budget by Minister Sorbara, to bring in legislation that will provide the auditor the ability to provide, 90 days before the fixed election, the actual real financial figures of the province of Ontario, so no political party can play games, make up numbers with respect to deficits or debts, and every political party will be able to base their political platform on a substantive set of numbers that are all the same.

This gives predictability and credibility to the process. It's something that I believe a number of members of the public will appreciate. It will certainly be healthier for the political process. You'll be able to attract good-quality candidates because they will know upfront exactly when the nomination process opens, when it closes and when the election date takes place.

I very much look forward to the opposition's support. I know my friend the member from Lanark-Carleton will support this because, he too brought forward a private member's bill similar to this one.

Mr Kormos: I'm pleased to see the debate on this bill proceeding, albeit at a somewhat slow and steady pace. I'm pleased to see members of the Conservative op-

position participating in the debate around Bill 86. I'm pleased to see the interest shown by folks out there in their homes, as they're watching this on the legislative channel, in this debate around Bill 86, recognizing of course that people are focused not so much on this concept of fixed election dates as they are on the fact that Liberals promised anything they could or anything they had to to get elected and then, once elected, broke those promises in a New York minute. It was Mach 1 speed with which Liberals broke those promises.

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The focus of people watching this debate is not so much on fixed election days as it is on the fact that it's the Liberal government here at Queen's Park that privatized health care; it's the Liberal government that privatized chiropractic; it's the Liberal government—Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals—that privatized optometry services; it's Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals that have privatized physiotherapy services—you see, American style. What they want to do is create an American style, and they have succeeded. With respect to optometrists, chiropractors and physiotherapists, they've created an American-style health care system. If you've got the cash, why, you can get the service. If you've got the money, you can get the treatment.

Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals—broken promises and privatization of health care—have done not just a disservice to our parents but indeed our grandparents, who struggled so hard for so long to build a public health care system here in the province of Ontario.

People are focused on the next election all right, but it's not with a view to it being on a fixed date as much as it is with a view to turfing these Liberals out of Queen's Park.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Durham has two minutes to reply.

Mr O'Toole: I'll be brief. I'd just like to thank the members for responding to the comments I made, and to know that the note I was given was an attempt to find harmony here tonight on this bill. In that spirit, I'll withdraw any further comments I have on Bill 86.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Hampton: I, of course, am pleased to be able to participate in this debate because I, for one, believe that there is clearly a democratic deficit in Ontario. I think it's clear to everyone who looks at the percentage turnouts in Ontario elections that the number of people who vote in Ontario elections has been declining. In some respects, that decline, in most recent years, has been precipitous. I think that is a problem that we need to address.

Second, I think there are real problems in terms of the financing of electoral campaigns. Ontario election campaigns, I would say, in about the last 10 years, have turned into an exercise of, "Who has the most money and therefore can purchase the most advertising?" They are not campaigns of, "Who has the best ideas, the most interesting ideas or the ideas which most thoroughly challenge the citizens of the province?" No, our election campaigns have turned into exercises of, "Who has the

most money with which to buy the most advertising?" I think that is a problem.

Third, I'll pay some tribute here to former member Sean Conway, who has said that another element of the democratic deficit is the degree to which decision-making in government—in fact, control over the whole agenda—is centred in the Premier's office. That, I believe, is also a problem. When the Premier's office decides from day to day what the issues will be, what will be introduced in terms of legislation, what the debating order will be and even which of the government backbenchers can utter a peep, then I think that is clearly a problem for democracy.

Finally, there are other issues. It seems to me that we have some parts of Ontario which are growing very rapidly in population and other parts of Ontario which are not growing rapidly in terms of population. We have to find some way of balancing that equation in terms of appropriate democratic representation.

Suffice it to say that none of those issues, I think, are really being addressed by this bill. In fact, each of the four areas that I've suggested here probably deserves immediate attention and detailed attention, but none of them receives any attention from this bill. So there's clearly a problem, yet the bill, which the government trumpets, does absolutely nothing to address any of those.

I just want to deal for a minute with what is actually in the bill. The government wants people to believe that this bill sets, according to some constitutional rule, fixed dates for elections. I want to disabuse people of that notion right away. Despite the fact that that's the government spin, that is not the reality.

It says right in the bill that nothing in this bill affects the capacity of the Lieutenant Governor to dissolve the Legislature and call an election. What that means is that the Premier, on any given day, could go to the Lieutenant Governor and say, "I want you to dissolve the Legislature. I want you to issue a writ of election," and it would happen. If the constitutional apparatus that we have in place now—and the constitutional powers and the constitutional conventions that we have in place—are not rearranged or are not removed or are not restricted by this bill, what is this bill?

In my view, what this bill really is is simply a promise by the government. It doesn't change the constitutional convention of the province. It doesn't take away the powers of the Lieutenant Governor to dissolve the Legislature. So if it doesn't do those things, all it really is is sort of a high-brow promise.

I guess, after breaking so many of their election promises, this government believes that they really do have to dress up their promises now. They have to give them the dressing, the appearance, of quasi-law or quasi-legal apparatus, because no one believes an ordinary promise made by this government any longer. That's really what this bill is. It doesn't change our constitutional conventions; it doesn't change our constitutional processes in this province. It really says that Dalton McGuinty, the Premier, promises that the next election will

be sometime in the first 10 days of October of 2007. But even while the bill says that, the Premier could go to the Lieutenant Governor at any time. He could go to the Lieutenant Governor in July of 2007, or May of 2007, or March or February of 2007, or November of 2006, or September of 2006, and say to the Lieutenant Governor, "I want the House dissolved and I want an election now," and, by our constitutional conventions, it would happen.

If that's in the bill, I'm left to wonder: Why did the government present it? Why are we debating it? If it doesn't change the constitution, if it doesn't change the constitutional processes or the constitutional conventions of the province of Ontario in terms of electoral dates and electoral processes, why do it?

I come back to the obvious answer: The government presented this bill because it knew that if it didn't do something it was going to be left open to the accusation that, "Ah, you promised this in the election campaign and once again you haven't delivered." But even in delivering it, they haven't delivered anything other than a simple promise that has been dressed up with some superfluous legal language, all of which means nothing. So that's where we are.

I would prefer, in my time, to actually talk about what the real problems are that need to be addressed. It is becoming of increasing concern for Ontario citizens that we now regularly see situations where 38% of the vote can elect 72% of the members, or 42% of the vote can elect 76% of the members. Increasingly, people of our province are saying that this doesn't make sense. This does not make sense. A party or an organization which gets 40% of the vote or 42% of the vote should not then have 76% or 78% of the members of the Legislature. How can a party which doesn't have majority status, in terms of the citizens who vote, have a huge majority in the Legislature? It seems completely out of balance. It seems completely out of anyone's sense of proportion or anyone's sense of fair play, fair result. But that regularly happens.

2020

Now, what I thought the government should introduce, what I hoped the government would introduce, would be legislation with respect to proportional representation. That is in fact what is happening in the majority of parliamentary democracies everywhere in the world now, even the mother of all Parliaments in Great Britain. The new Parliament of Scotland is elected on the basis of proportional representation. Wales: proportional representation. The British members of the European Parliament: elected on the basis of proportional representation. If you go to Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Germany, Holland, Belgium, France, Italy, most of Europe now operates on the basis of proportional representation. New Zealand operates on the basis of proportional representation. So what we see happening, in virtually all of the other parliamentary democracies, whether they be British parliamentary democracies or European parliamentary democracies, is a move toward proportional representation.

Experience shows that when you move to a proportional representation system, the outcome of the election, in terms of who gets X level of representation, very closely corresponds to the percentage of the vote. So if a party gets 15% of the vote, they more or less get 15% of the seats in the Legislature. If a party gets 40% of the vote, they more or less get 40% of the seats in the Legislature. So that, I think, accords more closely with people's sense of fairness, with people's sense of proportion, balance and an outcome which reflects the intention of the people who actually vote.

So I would have hoped that with all of the press releases, with all of the spin from the government, that's actually what we would have seen. Or I was hoping that we would have seen meaningful legislation to deal with the issue of electoral financing, the financing of political parties between elections and the financing of political parties during election campaigns.

Now, recently we've seen the federal Liberal Party adopt real restrictions on political financing. Basically, what is now federal law is a rule which says that corporations and unions can contribute a very restricted amount to political parties, and once that limit is reached, it is a hard-and-fast cap and there is no way that limit can be exceeded. Otherwise, all political financial contributions must come from individuals, and even there, that is restricted. So I was hoping that we would see something like that presented by the government, because it is a real political problem.

In fact, it is the law now in Manitoba that corporations and unions can contribute no money to political parties, that all of the contributions must come from individual citizens. The result of that is that you see much less television advertising in a Manitoba election and you see much more in the way of actual public debate. You actually see a lot of all-candidates meetings. You actually see those all-candidates meetings being broadcast provincially on television or being broadcast provincially in terms of major radio networks. The emphasis is upon citizen participation, citizen activism, rather than who has the most money. But as I search this bill, as presented by the government, do I see anything which addresses that fundamental issue? No. It's as if the government wants to pretend that that problem, that challenge doesn't even exist.

I think if we're really serious about political reform, about addressing the democratic deficit, that has to be on the agenda. That has to be addressed and dealt with, and it has to be addressed and dealt with now.

Third, the whole issue of Prime-Ministerial or Premierish dominance of the government—and we've seen these accusations with respect to the federal government recently, the fact that Jean Chrétien's office dominated everything, and now the argument that Paul Martin's office even decides who can run and who can't run. These have actually become germane issues in the federal election campaign.

But I understand the government wishes to adjourn the debate, Speaker, so at this time I move adjournment of the debate.

The Acting Speaker: Mr Hampton has moved adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): Mr Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to call the orders for second and third reading of the Pr bills concurrently, and for second and third readings to be moved on the sponsor member's behalf. I believe we have unanimous consent for that.

The Acting Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

MALTON SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH ACT, 2004

Mr Qaadri moved second reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr2, An Act respecting the Malton Seventh-day Adventist Church.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Qaadri moved third reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr2, An Act respecting the Malton Seventh-day Adventist Church.

The Acting Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

ASSOCIATION OF REGISTERED GRAPHIC DESIGNERS OF ONTARIO ACT, 2004

Mr Duncan, on behalf of Mr Peterson, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr3, An Act respecting the Association of Registered Graphic Designers of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Duncan, on behalf of Mr Peterson, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr3, An Act respecting the Association of Registered Graphic Designers of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

CONRAD GREBEL UNIVERSITY COLLEGE ACT, 2004

Mr Duncan, on behalf of Mr Arnott, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr5, An Act respecting Conrad Grebel University College.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Duncan, on behalf of Mr Arnott, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr5, An Act respecting Conrad Grebel University College.

The Acting Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as it in the motion.

2030

REDEEMER UNIVERSITY COLLEGE ACT, 2004

Mr Caplan, on behalf of Mr McMeekin, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr6, An Act respecting Redeemer University College.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Caplan, on behalf of Mr McMeekin, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr6, An Act respecting Redeemer University College.

The Acting Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): Mr Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent to revert to introduction of bills for the purpose of introducing one bill, and to proceed with second and third reading without debate or amendment.

The Acting Speaker: Is there unanimous consent for the government House leader's request? Agreed.

ELECTION FINANCES AMENDMENT ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LE FINANCEMENT DES ÉLECTIONS

Mr Duncan, on behalf of Mr Bryant, moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 114, An Act to amend the Election Finances Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur le financement des élections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

ELECTION FINANCES AMENDMENT ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LE FINANCEMENT DES ÉLECTIONS

Mr Duncan, on behalf of Mr Bryant, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 114, An Act to amend the Election Finances Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur le financement des élections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

ELECTION FINANCES
AMENDMENT ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LE FINANCEMENT DES ÉLECTIONS

Mr Duncan, on behalf of Mr Bryant, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 114, An Act to amend the Election Finances Act / Loi modifiant la Loi sur le financement des élections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

SANDY'S LAW
(LIQUOR LICENCE AMENDMENT), 2004

LOI SANDY DE 2004
(MODIFICATION DE LA LOI
SUR LES PERMIS D'ALCOOL)

Mr Parsons moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 43, An Act to amend the Liquor Licence Act by requiring signage cautioning pregnant women that the consumption of alcohol while pregnant is the cause of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder / Projet de loi 43, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les permis d'alcool en exigeant que soient placées des affiches avertissant les femmes enceintes que la consommation d'alcool pendant la grossesse occasionne l'ensemble des troubles causés par l'alcoolisation fœtale.

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I believe we have unanimous consent to allow the official opposition up to 10 minutes to speak on this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Ted Arnott): Is there consent to allow for this? Agreed.

Hon Mr Duncan: On a further point of order, Mr Speaker: I believe we have unanimous consent to defer the vote on this until tomorrow in deferred votes.

The Acting Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to defer the vote? Agreed.

Is there debate? The member for Simcoe North.

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'm pleased to rise this evening to speak to this bill. It has been a very confusing evening, and I want to thank the member for bringing this bill forward. I know it has a lot of sentimental importance to you, as it does to a lot of people in this House.

I can tell you right upfront that our caucus has had some difficulty with this particular bill. We would have liked to have had maybe a little bit more time to debate this particular piece of legislation, but we understand the importance to all of the people here in the House, to all of our caucus members and to all the members of the Legislature.

It's important that we say upfront—and I'm trying to say this in a very passionate manner to you. We understand how important it has been to you. That's not to say we haven't had members in our caucus and other mem-

bers of this House who are very concerned about this legislation as well and who have had difficulties in their lives with pieces of legislation. So we wanted to point out that it's important that the people of Ontario realize that this is something that is an internal type of issue within our caucuses, with all members of the Legislature, as we talk about the death of a son of a member of our Legislature. These are very difficult words to say at a time like this. I know Mr Runciman couldn't be here tonight. He would have liked to have said a few words about it, but he had a loss of someone in his family, and that has happened for different members. I know Mr Chudleigh is not here, but I think we all feel for what happened to Mr Chudleigh's daughter this past spring. It was a difficult time. It happened, I believe, just a couple of weeks after the loss of our colleague Dominic Agostino.

So we've had tough times in the Legislature as we've tried to deal not only with the ordinary debate that we discuss on a day-to-day basis, the budgets and all the pieces of legislation the different ministries bring forth. But these types of bills—this is a private member's bill—are important to individual caucus members, individual MPPs, here in this provincial Legislature, because they do come forward with a strong concern.

I have to say upfront, we've seen some of the literature put forward by the Early Years centres. It's very important that that type of literature be put forward. I have two Early Years centres in the riding of Simcoe North—an office in Orillia and an office in Midland—and they will be promoting this problem, which Mr Parsons has brought forward in the House, through all their different resources as they deal with fetal alcohol syndrome.

In the short time we have to say a few words here tonight, we understand the significance of this to you, Mr Parsons, as an MPP. We applaud you for bringing it forward. We just want you to know that we share your sorrow and your concerns, because we have members in the House who would probably like to bring a piece of legislation forward at some point in the future to deal with some of the issues they feel are very important to their families and their lives.

With that, I'm pleased to comment on behalf of our caucus. I know I haven't really said an awful lot here tonight. It's just that we did want to make it clear that our caucus—I personally, support the bill. Other members have some concerns because they think the bill maybe goes too far into the lives of some business owners etc as they try to work with their businesses. On the other hand, if it's going to save a life, perhaps it's very well worthwhile, and, in the end, maybe that's what's important.

I congratulate the people who put forward the pieces of literature on behalf of the Early Years. I believe it comes through Minister Bountrogianni's ministry. When I look at young couples who are perhaps looking at having families in the future, I think it's important they understand the significance of the problems with alcohol and pregnancies.

I don't really have a lot more to say on this, except that we did want to make a few comments on behalf of our caucus to point out we don't really have unanimous support in our caucus, but we understand the significance to the member opposite and to the citizens of the province of Ontario as we move forward with this type of legislation.

The Acting Speaker: I am told I must seek clarification of the House that consent was given that a recorded vote is deemed to have been requested and deferred. Agreed? Agreed.

Mr Parsons has moved third reading of Bill 43, and this vote will be deferred until tomorrow at the appropriate time when we do deferred votes.

Hon Mr Duncan: I seek unanimous consent to call the orders for second and third readings of Bill 33 and to allow the member to make those motions.

The Acting Speaker: Is there unanimous consent of the House to call the order for second and third readings of that bill? Agreed.

IRISH HERITAGE DAY ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 SUR LE JOUR DU PATRIMOINE IRLANDAIS

Mr O'Toole moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 33, An Act proclaiming Irish Heritage Day /
Projet de loi 33, Loi proclamant le Jour du patrimoine irlandais.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

IRISH HERITAGE DAY ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 SUR LE JOUR DU PATRIMOINE IRLANDAIS

Mr O'Toole moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 33, An Act proclaiming Irish Heritage Day /
Projet de loi 33, Loi proclamant le Jour du patrimoine irlandais.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): Mr Speaker, I believe I have unanimous consent for Mr Levac, the member for Brant, to call the order for third reading of Bill 40, standing in the name of Mr Wilkinson.

The Acting Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to allow the member for Brant—agreed? Agreed.

EMERGENCY SERVICE PROVIDER'S INSURANCE PROTECTION ACT (INSURANCE AMENDMENT), 2004

LOI DE 2004 SUR LA PROTECTION DES FOURNISSEURS DE SERVICES D'URGENCE (MODIFICATION DE LA LOI SUR LES ASSURANCES)

Mr Levac, on behalf of Mr Wilkinson, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 40, An Act to amend the Insurance Act to protect emergency service providers from rate increases to their personal contracts of automobile insurance /
Projet de loi 40, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les assurances visant à protéger les fournisseurs de services d'urgence contre l'augmentation des taux dans leurs contrats d'assurance-automobile personnels.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): Mr Speaker, I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard some noes.

All those in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay." The nays have disappeared.

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

This House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 am.

The House adjourned at 2042.

CONTENTS

Wednesday 23 June, 2004

FIRST READINGS

Election Finances Amendment Act, 2004, Bill 114, Mr Bryant	
Agreed to	3225

SECOND READINGS

Election Statute Law Amendment Act, 2004, Bill 86, Mr Bryant	
Mr Kormos	3211, 3215, 3222
Mr Sergio	3214
Mr Sterling	3214
Mr Bisson	3214
Mr Leal	3215
Mrs Sandals	3215, 3219
Ms Broten	3216
Mr O'Toole	3218, 3219, 3223
Ms Martel	3218
Ms Wynne	3219
Mr Marchese	3222
Mrs Van Bommel	3222
Mr Watson	3222
Mr Hampton	3223
Debate adjourned	3225
Election Finances Amendment Act, 2004, Bill 114, Mr Bryant	
Agreed to	3225
Irish Heritage Day Act, 2003, Bill 33, Mr O'Toole	
Agreed to	3227

THIRD READINGS

Election Finances Amendment Act, 2004, Bill 114, Mr Bryant	
Agreed to	3226
Sandy's Law (Liquor Licence Amendment), 2004, Bill 43, Mr Parsons	
Mr Dunlop	3226
Vote deferred	3227
Irish Heritage Day Act, 2003, Bill 33, Mr O'Toole	
Agreed to	3227
Emergency Service Provider's Insurance Protection Act (Insurance Amendment), 2004, Bill 40, Mr Wilkinson	
Agreed to	3227

SECOND AND THIRD READINGS

Malton Seventh-day Adventist Church Act, 2004, Bill Pr2, Mr Qaadri	
Agreed to	3225
Association of Registered Graphic Designers of Ontario Act, 2004, Bill Pr3, Mr Peterson	
Agreed to	3225
Conrad Grebel University College Act, 2004, Bill Pr5, Mr Arnott	
Agreed to	3225
Redeemer University College Act, 2004, Bill Pr6, Mr McMeekin	
Agreed to	3225

TROISIÈME LECTURE

Loi de 2004 modifiant la loi sur le financement des élections, projet de loi 114, M. Bryant	
Adoptée	3226
Loi de 2003 sur le Jour du patrimoine irlandais, projet de loi 33, M. O'Toole	
Adoptée	3227
Loi Sandy de 2004 (modification de la Loi sur les permis d'alcool), projet de loi 43, M. Parsons	
Vote différé	3227
Loi de 2004 sur la protection des fournisseurs de services d'urgence (modification de la Loi sur les assurances), projet de loi 40, M. Wilkinson	
Adoptée	3227

TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Mercredi 23 juin 2004

PREMIÈRE LECTURE

Loi de 2004 modifiant la loi sur le financement des élections, projet de loi 114, M. Bryant	
Adoptée	3225

DEUXIÈME LECTURE

Loi de 2004 modifiant des lois en ce qui concerne les élections, projet de loi 86, M. Bryant	
Adoptée	3225
Loi de 2004 modifiant la loi sur le financement des élections, projet de loi 114, M. Bryant	
Adoptée	3226
Loi de 2003 sur le Jour du patrimoine irlandais, projet de loi 33, M. O'Toole	
Adoptée	3227



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**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 38^e législature

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(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 24 June 2004

Jeudi 24 juin 2004

**Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling**

**Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling**

**Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers**

**Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers**



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 24 June 2004

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 24 juin 2004

*The House met at 1000.
Prayers.*

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

GASOLINE CONSUMER PROTECTION ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 SUR LA PROTECTION DES CONSOMMATEURS D'ESSENCE

Mr Crozier moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 80, An Act to provide information to consumers respecting the price of gasoline and the ownership of gasoline retailers and to require certain additional information from major oil companies / *Projet de loi 80, Loi visant à fournir des renseignements aux consommateurs en ce qui concerne le prix de l'essence et les propriétaires des détaillants d'essence et exigeant certains renseignements supplémentaires de la part des grosses sociétés pétrolières.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr Ted Arnott): Mr Crozier has moved second reading of Bill 80.

You have 10 minutes to make your presentation.

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): It is my pleasure to stand this morning and speak on my own behalf and the behalf of tens of thousands of Ontarians when it comes to the pricing of retail gasoline in Ontario.

How many times have you, any of us here, those who might be watching, gone by a gas station in the morning and said, "Well, yes, I need some gas. I think I'll fill up on the way home from work today or on the way home from the store," only to turn around and come back later that day and find that the price has skyrocketed? At the very least, it's higher than what you passed in the morning. How many times have you looked at your gas gauge and there's a weekend coming up, you're going to make a little trip, and you think, "Oh, I better get this filled up tomorrow before we head out," only to wake up in the morning and find that the price of gasoline has again gone up?

I don't know how many times we've spoken about this in this Legislature—countless times. I can remember specifically back in September 1998 when then-Premier Mike Harris stood down there in his place and said,

"We're going to wrestle the major oil companies to the ground." Well, I think since that time, and including that time, the only thing we've done is wrestle them to the ceiling.

This bill, although it acknowledges in what isn't in the bill that oil pricing, retail gasoline pricing, results from a worldwide global market, it does recognize that the purchaser of gasoline, the customer, the ordinary Ontarian, needs a little bit of help in determining when and where to buy their gasoline. Again, I acknowledge that I'm not one who feels that we can control gasoline prices. It's a worldwide market. It fluctuates. In those areas where gasoline pricing is controlled, it's found that, on average, the price tends to be higher, and I certainly don't want to in any way influence higher prices. So one of the main components of this bill is one that allows the customer to determine when they're going to buy gasoline, dependent upon what the price of gasoline is.

Let's take an example. It will require that gasoline prices, if they're going to change—and this is up or down—be posted 72 hours in advance. So if the price is going to go up, somewhere in that 72 hours, and probably more toward the end of it, it gives you the opportunity to top up your tank at that lower price, if I might use the term "lower," but at today's price, before it goes up.

Someone might say, "Well, that's great, but you're also going to have to warn us when prices come down." I say, "Absolutely," because in that case, if prices are going to come down sometime in the next 72 hours or at the end of 72 hours, why, you then can use your gas sparingly, or you can do what they do in racing terms: have a "splash and go." Mr Decker at the table would understand that term, because we talk about racing a lot. But you could buy a minimal amount of gas, wait till the price comes down, and then purchase your gasoline at the lower price.

What it would also do is have in legislation what we see at many pumps today, and that is that the retailer would have to post the amount of taxes that are in a litre of gasoline. Many of our pumps, have that there today, where there are 10 cents of federal excise tax, where there are 14.7 cents of Ontario tax, and then there's the GST on top of that. So you'll know what taxes you're paying in a litre of gasoline.

The next thing this bill would do—and it's one of clarity and letting everyone know just who they're doing business with—is require a gas retailer to post their affiliation, if it isn't already on their sign, be it one of the major oil companies' gasoline stations, or if you're affiliated and carry their sign. But if you're affiliated

with them and don't have the major oil company sign on it, then you would be required on your receipts and visibly at the station to identify the major oil company or the oil company that you're affiliated with.

There is another thing this bill would do that I think goes to its transparency, and that is that it would require the major oil companies that have business along the line—ie, retail, wholesale, refining and exploration, or getting the crude out of the ground—to disclose to the public their profits in all four areas so, for example, if they are losing money at the retail level and therefore being predatory on some of the other market, we would be able to identify that. Quite frankly, predatory pricing is an issue these days. So it would make it more transparent so we can understand where those oil companies are making their money. If, for example, one of the major oil companies has a retail station where they also sell a variety of goods—be it candy, cigarettes, newspapers, the whole gamut—we can see if perhaps they're enticing customers in an unfair way, just to make money in another part of their retailing environment.

1010

This really is all about clarity. It's all about transparency. It's all about knowing when gasoline prices are going to change and being able to judge your buying that way.

These points that I have in this bill came from a study that was given to, I believe, the consumer and business services minister of the former government. I would expect that they're the kinds of issues about which my friends in the official opposition and, I certainly hope, in the third party would share the same concerns, and I hope they will support me.

What we're trying to do is take some volatility out of the market. We're trying to give customers the opportunity to buy gasoline mainly before price spikes. That's really what it's all about. It's the price spikes that bother us most. Rarely do we see prices drop quite as rapidly as they go up. So it's on these rising markets that I'm really trying to say to the folks out there, "We understand why you're so concerned."

In closing, I'd like to say, as I began, that a lot has been said about this. Certainly a lot is talked about out in the public and a lot has been said in this place about it but, quite frankly, nobody has done anything about it. I think it's time we sent a signal to the people of Ontario that we are genuinely concerned about this issue and that we really do want to take a step in the direction of addressing their concerns. For far too long we've given this issue lip service and we've all complained about it. We've said to our constituents, "Yes, I understand what you're talking about," but we've done nothing. I think it's time, with your support, that we send a message to the government of the day that it certainly is time we did something. It's time we stepped up to the plate and protected our consumers, and I would urge you to support me in taking that step.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I'm pleased to join the debate with the member from

Essex. Bruce Crozier has certainly been on this matter for a little while. It would be nice if the Minister of Consumer and Business Services was in the House to join in the debate and understand what is going on here, because this directly affects him.

If you talk about looking at this in terms of doing something, I had my Bill 48 in front of the House a week ago and—

The Acting Speaker: I would remind the member that it's inappropriate to make reference to the absence of any other member in the House.

Mr Tascona: I know the rules, Speaker. Thanks very much.

I just want to say that this is a serious issue. My Bill 48 was in the House a couple of weeks ago—and Gilles Bisson, the member from Timmins-James Bay, is with me on this: If the member wants to get volatility out of the market, you're going to have to do a lot more than post notices of changes in gas prices. The bottom line is that my Bill 48, which deals with gas prices and putting a freeze on them to get some volatility out of the market, received first reading and was passed in second reading—

Mr Crozier: Freeze them higher than they are today.

Mr Tascona: Oh no, the prices are still higher than what I put it at, if you go up to my area and you go up to the north. I don't know where you're buying your gas.

But I'll tell you right now, what the Liberals did and what the government did was put it into the committee of the whole, and everybody knows it will die a slow, lingering death, because that was their intent. If you wanted something to be done, you should have put it into a committee for hearings. So put your money where your mouth is. We'll see where you are today, whether you're going to kill Mr Crozier's bill in terms of putting it into committee of the whole. Bill 48, which I put forward, would put price stability in there, but it was put into committee of the whole by the Liberals, and I'm going to try to get it out. We'll see whether we can get it out, because we need price stability in this province.

As you look at it, the member makes a very good point: The money is not made at the retail level; the money is made at the refinery level. You have the big oil companies; there are three of them. They're making money off the refinery. I've heard reports that they're making as much as a 26% return on their money at the refinery level. I believe in transparency. I join with the member with respect to making sure there is transparency, but there have to be consequences. If they're making that kind of money and we find out what kind of money they're making—that's if he can get the support of his own government, let alone the Minister of Consumer and Business Services, whose record on birth certificates doesn't speak to us going too far on this—I would say that there should be consequences.

In the state of Maryland, they do not allow a major oil company to retail and also refine. There's good reason for that because of the way they can set the price and the way they control the market. This is all about controlling

the market. I can tell you that if we don't get some competition in this marketplace, we're going to be at a loss. What we need here is for the federal government to get rid of the GST, which is an illegal tax on the retail prices. I haven't seen anything from the current federal Liberal government about getting rid of that GST, though they had a task force in 1998—a very good task force; Dan McTeague was on it—that very clearly said, “Get rid of the GST. It's an illegal tax.” Nothing has been done with respect to the GST, and that is wrong.

The other part of it is looking at the volatility. They say it's tied to the world oil prices. There is no way it's tied to the world oil prices. We had a spike in Barrie from 79 cents up to 95 cents and back to 79 cents, all in the space of three weeks. Come on; that had nothing to do with world oil prices. It has to do with how much money is going to be made. I like what the member is doing with respect to getting at the refineries in terms of how much money they're making, but the competition is the issue. You've got the big oil companies controlling the refineries. There's no other place they're going to be able to get the gas. That's why you don't see, for example, the Wal-Marts come in and try to make more competition. Canadian Tire has to get their gas from the big oil companies' refineries, and that's why we don't have competition.

One of the recommendations of our task force said to the federal government, “We want you to look at the Competition Act.” They're looking at it right now, but the problem with the Competition Act, when you're dealing with a market-dominant position, is that they hold it to a criminal standard of proof. We're not dealing with crimes here; what we're dealing with is business and competition. It should be held to the civil standard of proof, a much lower standard of proof, to deal with unfair competition. All we want is fairness in the business place. That's what this is all about: fairness.

The province of PEI sets the price for gasoline. In this province, we set the price for what's going to happen with respect to hydro. So my question is, what's the next logical step here? Why are we afraid to set the price with respect to retail gas? You're not afraid to do it with respect to electrical prices. What are you afraid of? Is it the big oil companies that are going to control this and tell you what should be going on? All I'm looking for is fairness in the marketplace. I don't believe giving a notice of 72 hours—I don't even know whether that's legal because I've heard it may not be legal under the federal Competition Act. All it does is say to the oil companies, “We're going to spike it 10 cents and then it's going back around six cents. Then we're going to spike it another 10.” What does that do to volatility? It doesn't do anything to volatility. But the key issue here is to deal with that volatility.

That's why my Bill 48, which was killed by the Liberal government about two weeks ago—and I know Gilles Bisson is a big supporter of my bill, and it was supported by the House. Where did they put it? They put it in the committee of the whole so we couldn't have public hearings.

1020

I don't know where this bill from my friend Mr Crozier is going, but I would like to see it get out of the committee of the whole. If what we're doing here is wasting our time debating a bill that the government is going to shove into the committee of the whole and never have any public hearings on, then nothing is going to ever happen to this. What's the point, if the Liberal government's going to kill Mr Crozier's bill like they killed mine?

What we want is something done. The volatility of what we're facing here is very serious. We need to deal with what the real problem is. There's no competition in this province with respect to retail gas pricing. It's controlled by the three companies. The federal Competition Bureau is toothless because the federal Liberal government continues not to do anything at that level, and they also haven't gotten rid of the GST. I want people to know that.

I'm very pleased to speak on this. I support anything we can do to get clarity and transparency in the gasoline industry. I'll be supporting this, but I'm supporting it for one reason: I want to see some public hearings on this. If we're not going to get public hearings and it's going to be killed by the Liberal government as usual, then what's the point?

I commend the member for doing this. I hope the Minister of Consumer and Business Services is listening on television, so he knows what's going on.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate? The member for Timmins-James Bay.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): That's why he's wearing blue all the time. Colour coalition.

Mr Bisson: Yes, my affiliation is starting to show with the pink shirts, right?

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: No, those are colour problems with your television. Turn the tint a bit and you'll notice it's orange. You've got to do that on your glasses.

I want to take the opportunity this morning to go through this particular bill for a few minutes. Generally, at the end of the day, should we vote for it or should we not? I want to see what happens through debate.

I want to make clear a couple of things. The bill in itself ain't going to do a heck of a lot to deal with gasoline prices. I guess that's part of the problem I'm having with this debate and the way the bill is structured. The member is saying that what we need to do is have a provision in law that says that if a gas company wants to raise or, presumably, lower prices, they would have to post their intention of doing so for a period of 72 hours.

I'm not sure what the heck that's going to do at the end of the day in a big way to deal with the issue of gas prices overall. As we know, gas prices are set on the open market, based on what world prices are. The way that they have this quirky system—

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: Well, I know what you're saying. But presumably, they get together, they collude and all that stuff. We know.

The point I'm trying to make is this: I'm not convinced that saying we're going to post the increase or the decrease for a period of 72 hours is going to do a heck of a lot to force oil companies to stop gouging the public of Ontario.

Now, there's one provision of the bill which I think is a good idea, and that's one of the reasons I might end up supporting this in the end, and that is the idea of having segmented reports, made in law, that oil companies have to post how much profit or loss they made in various parts of their business. We all know that there are the people who do the extraction, the refining, the marketing and the sales. It's a segmented industry, the way the gas industry is set up. Forcing them to post their profits and how much money they've made in each of those parts of the business ain't a bad idea, because we just might find out exactly how much they are gouging us.

I believe oil companies collude. They come together and whisper behind closed doors about how much they're going to raise the price of gas on Thanksgiving Friday, so they can get the public for even more money as they travel to see family and friends. Then all of a sudden, miraculously, the price goes down. You're not going to tell me that OPEC and everybody else all of a sudden decided to raise the oil price on Friday. That's clearly a function of the oil companies themselves. So listing those profits in some sort of segmented report is not a bad idea.

However, even with that, I'm not convinced it's going to lower the price of gas overall. The issue is that what we can do to lower the prices, quite frankly, can be better done at the federal level. The federal government has refused—Mr Martin and, before that, Mr Chrétien—to basically hold those oil companies accountable. At the end of the day, it's a federal regulation. It's federal law. The federal government, the Liberals, want to do nothing. Why? Because they're beholden to the oil industry. They don't want, in the province of Alberta, to cause potential conflict that they may get from the oil companies and lose some possible support that they think they may, or probably don't have, in Alberta. So we have a toothless Liberal government that's not even prepared to whisper at the insurance companies to basically bring them into line. So what the member here is trying to do, I guess we can commend, but I'm not—because they're not roaring; they're whispering.

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): The gas companies.

Mr Bisson: Did I say “insurance”? Them too; they're in the same boat, as far as I'm concerned.

I just say, I'm not so sure. What could we do provincially? I think there are a couple of things that we can do that are pretty direct. One is that there was a bill introduced by Mr Tascona. I've introduced a bill that deals with the issue of trying to freeze the price of gas. That's something that's within our jurisdiction, our ability to do. Threatening to freeze the price of gas to the

insurance company by way of provincial legislation—I will guarantee you—

Interjections.

Mr Bisson: Did I say “insurance” again? You know, insurance prices are so high in this province since you guys have come to office. They keep on going up and up. I've got insurance calls coming in to the office every day and I've got insurance on the brain. I want to apologize for that.

I just say, if we really wanted to deal with the price of gas, one thing that we could do provincially is pass Mr Tascona's bill, take it out of the committee of the whole and pass it, or call my bill and pass that as well. My bill basically does what Rick Bartolucci asked the government to do when he was in opposition, which is to say, “Let's freeze the price of gas for a period of time to get the attention of the gas companies, and once they know that we can do that to them, they'll be less likely to come around and gouge people as they do now by practice.” Let's call a spade a spade. The federal Liberal government has done nothing to deal with this issue, and that's why we find ourselves in that debate today.

I support any initiative that tries to deal with the price of gas. However, I'm not confident that this bill will go anywhere near dealing with the issue. I'm not convinced that the idea of having to post the price of gas 72 hours in advance of an increase or a decrease is going to work. In fact, it may have an opposite effect when it comes to decreases. You may not get the decrease, because of the posting. We ought to think about that.

The other issue is having to force the gas industry to post profits and losses in the various segmented parts of the industry. I'm not convinced that, at the end of the day, it's going to do a heck of a lot when it comes to lowering the price of gas. The two big measures in the bill—we don't have a heck of a lot when it comes to forcing down the price of gas.

The last issue that he deals with is having small independents post their affiliation—who they're buying their gas from. I've got a bit of a problem with that one because it may have an opposite effect in taking away some of the competition that we've actually got in the system. Often, it's a small independent who comes in and offers the low price that forces the oil companies to lower their prices overall. If we start getting into this affiliation stuff, it may put at a disadvantage the small independents. I don't think that we should be doing that, because far too often we find ourselves, because of the independents, in a gas war that lowers prices. If we start monkeying around with the independents, I'm not so sure we're going to have the added effects.

I support anything that would deal with trying to get the price of gas down. I think this bill isn't going to do that and I think, as my good friend Mr Tascona said, if we do pass this bill, it's got to go to committee and we've got to bring in provisions from my bill and Mr Tascona's bill so we actually have some teeth when it comes to dealing with it.

My last point—because I know my friend Mr Prue wants to speak—is, if this thing does pass, I would guess

that this will never see the light of day when it comes to being proclaimed. Not a chance. I challenge my good friend Mr Crozier to show me that he's got an agreement with the government House leader that this bill will be passed this spring or next fall at third reading and you expect to have it proclaimed. I don't think it's ever going to happen. We should take this for what it is. He's trying to get ahead of an issue. God bless; I understand why he's doing it; but it's toothless.

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): I am very pleased to support Bill 80, from my colleague from Essex. I think the important point that needs to be made almost immediately is that what this is about is finding some way for us to protect consumers, to at least give consumers an opportunity, in essence, to have warning about the price changes. There's no doubt many members of the Legislature, myself and all my colleagues who are speaking here today, brought forward legislation in the past. We've debated these issues and tried to find a solution to it. This legislation, if we are able to get it through the Legislature and get it passed, will be one specific way of allowing consumers to have some notice of rising prices and indeed of prices that may be going down in the future. I would hope my colleague will have the full support of the House.

1030

As a member from northern Ontario, I can tell you that we feel particularly aggrieved about the price of gasoline at the gas stations in the north. As many of you will know, whatever the prices are down here, perhaps in the Toronto area, they tend to be substantially higher in the north. Recently, I must tell you, that discrepancy has been extraordinarily wide. There has been about a 20-to-25-cent differential between Thunder Bay and parts of Thunder Bay-Superior North, my riding, and down here in Toronto.

One thing we did in my riding was that we got together and picked a gas price task force, which the former mayor of Thunder Bay, who is now running federally in the federal election, Mr Boshcoff—and I'm sure Mr Boshcoff will do—

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): A good man.

Mr Gravelle: He's a very good man. As mayor, he was also upset about this, so we got a gas price task force together, which he chaired. I was very involved with that as well. It brought the oil companies in. We tried to understand what difference there should be between northern Ontario—I mean, we understand there are costs associated with transportation and other costs. We determined, quite frankly, that it was quite fair game for there to be about a four-cent differential, that that was legitimate. Our frustration has always been that the differential seems to be much, much wider in the north. As I say, recently we had an almost 25-cent differential. So we've been trying to find some way to deal with that.

I'll be honest. The frustration we have is also centred around the fact that when the prices went particularly high recently—they seemed to be in the mid-90s and

over a dollar a litre in some places in northern Ontario. When that happened, the oil companies came to our task force and, as usual, said to us, "We have no control over this. It's the high price of crude. It's instability in Iraq. It's a variety of other reasons." But the last time this happened, which I think was actually February 2002, when the quarterly reports came out, we saw record-breaking profits by the Canadian oil and gas companies. So for them to tell us that they have no control over these things, that the price of crude is high, is quite frustrating. I expect that when the quarterly reports come out we are again going to see record or massive profits by the oil and gas companies. So I also applaud the section of my colleague's bill that looks for the information in terms of the profits being made. Certainly in the north we are very concerned about it.

I myself have put forward a couple of pieces of legislation, one that I'll be reintroducing this afternoon, the gas price watchdog commission, that will allow us to—

Mr Brown: Tell us about that.

Mr Gravelle: Well, we will have the legislative power, if we are able to pass this bill, to have a watchdog commissioner, a commission office, that will be able to monitor and investigate. It will have whistle-blower protection. It's a good piece of legislation. I should give credit to my colleague next to me, Mr Colle, the member for Eglinton-Lawrence, who will be speaking, because he was the first one to introduce it, and he and I worked together on this closely.

Mr Colle: I was trying to help the north.

Mr Gravelle: Absolutely. He was. In fact, Mr Colle encouraged me to introduce it a year or so ago. So I'll be reintroducing that, because I think we need to find some way—this was one, and, may I say, a relatively benign way—to give somebody legislative power to go and check out the price differential, why the prices are what they are, because the oil companies invariably, when they come in to meet you, polite as they are, will never tell you exactly why the price is 95 cents a litre that particular day. They will not break it down for you. We know about the taxes, and there is that big differential. We know about the issue related to refineries.

The long and the short is, we need to do something. I believe this piece of legislation is terrific. I will be supporting it, and I hope that all colleagues in the House will support it today. Thank you for the opportunity to speak.

Mr Miller: It's my pleasure to speak to Bill 80, the private member's bill introduced by the member from Essex today. It is An Act to provide information to consumers respecting the price of gasoline and the ownership of gasoline retailers and to require certain additional information from major oil companies.

There have been a lot of gas price bills, private members' bills, introduced in this place. I commend him for introducing it. I know he is trying to, in a small way, address the problems of high gas prices, but I wonder how much it's really going to do.

One provision is that it requires 72 hours' notice. I would question whether that's going to be an advantage or not. If you're going away on a long weekend, if you fill up three days ahead of time, if you drive much, your tank's probably going to be empty by the time the long weekend rolls around, or you're going to have to buy gas on the weekend anyway. I'd be afraid that it would just provide an opportunity for collusion among the wholesalers, the refineries, the oil companies.

The bill also requires gasoline retailers that are affiliated with major gasoline retailers to indicate their affiliation. I have no problem with that. I'm not sure how much that's going to accomplish, but I don't have any problem with it.

The bill requires large oil companies that produce, refine and market gasoline to file annual segmented earning reports with the Minister of Consumer and Business Services. That's interesting. The more knowledge we have in terms of how much money is being made by the oil companies and refineries in particular, the better, in trying to improve the situation.

But the issues I'm hearing about in my riding to do with gas prices are, first of all, the high gas prices, but second, it's the differential for areas especially in northern Ontario. In my riding, particularly in the Parry Sound area, the prices are higher than in other parts of the riding, and there doesn't seem to be a logical explanation of why that is happening. I've certainly heard from Mr Tim Pelette of Parry Sound, who has been a real advocate, working very hard in his way to do what he can to raise awareness of the issue and to try to get something happening to correct the situation.

I've also heard from independent retailers in my riding who are concerned about the tactics used by large oil companies and refineries that have the effect of lessening competition and basically give the big oil companies more control. They inevitably put some of the small retailers out of business. It lessens competition and gives them more control over the prices.

I've been in contact with the Canadian Independent Petroleum Marketers Association. They have good ideas for a private member's bill that I probably will be putting forward in this place to address some of those issues in terms of trying to keep more competition for the independent operators. They have a proposed act, an act respecting fair marketing practices in the sale of gasoline and diesel oil. "The purpose of this act is to promote greater fairness in the pricing of gasoline and diesel oil. Specifically, the act restores the natural arbitrage that ensures that wholesale prices do not exceed retail prices of these fuels. This act will reduce geographic price differences at the pump to reasonable levels"—as I say, that's a real concern in northern Ontario, a real concern in Parry Sound—"and it will increase price competition," which we've heard from a few members is something we really need, "ultimately benefiting consumers of gasoline and diesel oil." But it doesn't attempt to limit retail prices in any way. As I think has been stated by a few members, the price of gas is really something that is set worldwide.

I think this bill deserves some consideration, this one being suggested by the Canadian Independent Petroleum Marketers Association, because it really would keep more of the independent operators alive and put them on a fair playing field.

It does this through a few specific means. "The highest wholesale price the refiner or wholesaler charges at a location must at no time be higher than: the retail price at the refiner's or wholesaler's directly or indirectly operated retail outlet." So they can't have a lower price than they're charging to independent operators, thereby putting the independent operators out of business. That is certainly a good point.

In this bill, they would also require that "No refiner shall restrict the quantity of fuel available at a supply point at which a retailer or wholesaler is able to obtain gasoline or diesel oil." A refiner can't basically cut off an independent operator so they don't have a supply of fuel to sell, once again restricting competition. And, "No refiner or wholesaler shall set a retail price for gasoline or diesel oil other than at its directly or indirectly operated outlets." So it can't set the price in places it doesn't control.

This bill, which I will be introducing, could really address a couple of the critical problems, especially the fact that the independent operators are being squeezed out of business, thereby very much reducing competition in this area. The more competition we have, the better. The more true competition we have, the better.

1040

I commend the member for Essex for trying to address some of the problems with high gasoline prices. I don't really think the 72-hour notification is going to achieve too much. I note also that the member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford has introduced Bill 48 toward price stability—as he mentioned, it has gone into committee of the whole—and he raised some good points. He also brought up the idea that there has to be more competition in the pricing of fuel.

Consideration should be given to trying to address the key concerns I'm hearing about: the geographic differences in prices, particularly in more remote areas in northern Ontario. In my riding, around the Parry Sound area the price seems to be consistently higher. Also, legislation needs to be introduced to address the unfair tactics that big oil companies and refineries use to limit competition, which inevitably gives them more control over the market and leads to higher prices. I think we need to see more competition in the market for gas, and that should result in lower prices.

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): It is indeed an honour and a privilege to rise and speak to Bill 80, but I have to admit from the outset that I have very mixed feelings about the bill. The bill does two good things and one that I think it doesn't do at all.

Let's deal with the good things first. It requires that gas stations post the affiliations of the gas companies that control or supply them so the whole world can see that. It's important that people know the product they are

buying and know full well whether or not they trust the company to sell them what they need or want.

I think back to about a year or two ago when many General Motors cars were afflicted by Shell gasoline, where the deposits in the gasoline or what they were mixing in it were causing all of the dials and gas gauges to be faulty. People would say, "I'm not going to buy Shell gas because I'm worried about my faulty readings." That happened to me when I ran out of gas one day. I stopped buying Shell gas. But of course many of the independents buy their gas from Shell. People would go down to Congo or one of the other independents or smaller gas companies and buy the gas there and feel they were safe, but in fact they were not. I'm glad to say that I believe Shell has got away from that problem, but it is one of the key aspects: that consumers must know about the product they are buying.

Also, not particularly to pick on Shell, but there was a time when many people were boycotting Shell gasoline because of Shell's policies in Nigeria. For a while even the city of Toronto had a stipulation that city of Toronto tenders could not include Shell gasoline for precisely their practices in the Third World and how they were treating the people particularly of Nigeria. Consumers need to know that information and should have that information so the gas stations or the gas companies can't sell off their gas to independents in the guise that it is an independent company. The reality is that most of the profits, if not all, are made not by the little guy on the corner pumping the gas but by the big multinational corporations.

Consumers have a right to know what they are buying, from whom they are buying and the conditions under which that product was produced, so we are in agreement with that section of the act and believe it is valuable.

The second section is the segmented reports, which is too often not done, so that consumers—people, the general public—can understand the actual pricing and the cost of the gasoline or the motor fuel they're putting in their cars, because it could also be diesel, ethanol or any other number of products that cars can use these days. They need to know whether the profits are being made in refining or sales or marketing or production. They need to know that. If we as a government are to know that, if we are to make laws and regulations around the pricing of gasoline or to have any influence at all, those statistics, those facts, need to be known, and they can only be known if there is a law requiring their production. If we are without that information, we will never be able to regulate the gas industry because we will never know whether there are profits in fact being made with the spiking of gas prices, as seems to happen daily, weekly, monthly. It happens all the time.

I am constantly amazed. I was out last night and gasoline was selling for 77.9 at a gas station. I was in a restaurant across the street and, when I came out of that restaurant, it was selling for 82.9. I don't know what in the world caused it to go up five cents while I had dinner, but there it was. There is the reality of what is happening, and the consumers obviously are very upset about that.

That brings me to the third point, and I think the controversial point—or maybe it's not controversial at all—and that is the 72 hours' notice for prices to change. I would prefer that this said, "72 hours for prices that are going up," because, quite frankly, I don't believe that gas companies or independents or anyone who wants to reduce the price should have to give notice. In fact, it may stop some small independents from doing that, because they're going to have to post and give advance notice to the big companies that they're going to reduce their prices 72 hours hence, which gives the big companies an opportunity to match them.

I have some real problems with that, because it is the small independents that usually lead the way in keeping the prices lower. I do know that if you go to some of the smaller independent companies in my neighbourhood, they usually run, on average, about one cent a litre less than the big companies, particularly—well, I don't have to mention the six sisters; there they are. They are the ones who control and usually have the highest price for their gasoline. So I am very wary about hurting the small independent retailers. I am very worried about not giving them the option to reduce the price of gas without giving notice to the giants. Quite frankly, I believe the bill should have said, "72 hours' intent of notice to increase the price." If that's all it was, I would not have the same misgivings about this particular section but, as it reads now, it's any fluctuation at all, whether it's going up or down, a penny, half a penny, a tenth of a cent, whatever it is.

I invite people to look at the cost of gasoline too, because I'm constantly amazed. If the crude oil price goes up a dollar for a barrel—a barrel contains almost exactly 200 litres; it's 50 gallons US—that should reflect about half a cent a litre. But I'll tell you, when the crude oil price goes up a dollar per barrel, instead of raising the price by half a cent—and they have reserves for months. Notwithstanding that, instead of raising it half a cent, you will see huge fluctuations—eight, 10, 12 cents—based on half a cent. I know these guys have to be gouging, and we all know they're gouging.

The reality is—and I've got 25 seconds—I support two parts of the bill, and I'm not sure exactly—I want to hear more debate—whether to support it or not. But I don't think the 72 hours is right. If it does go to committee, it needs to be changed.

What we really need, though, is stronger bills. Those which were proposed by Mr Bartolucci, Mr Bradley, Mr Colle, Mr Bisson and Mr Tascona were all a little bit stronger than this one, but we really do need to get our act together for the consumers.

Mr Colle: I think Bill 80, put forward by Bruce Crozier, the member for Essex, is an extremely positive and important bill because it doesn't just whine about the price of gas; it actually proposes a solution. The solution is not all-encompassing, because we don't have power over the price of a barrel of oil coming out of Iraq or Saudi Arabia or even coming out of our friend Ralph Klein in Alberta. We pay world prices for Ralph's oil.

Therefore, we have a bill here that says, "Within our power, realistically, here are some suggestions that protect the consumer." It brings about transparency. It deals with disclosure of profits in different segments. It also tries to do something about the manipulation of prices that the member from East York mentioned, where you go into a coffee shop for a doughnut and you say, "I'll get gas on the way out." Going in, it was 80 cents; you come out the door and it's a dollar. There's no reason for that. I think the 72-hour provision is an attempt to bring some kind of rationality to it.

1050

Again, these are things within the parameters of provincial government. I really think it's worth a good, strong look by our government.

I also hope we realize that in this bill is also the continuing declaration of how much of gas goes in taxes. I would like to include on that line too that now, for the first time in the province's history, we're putting some of that gas tax revenue, which is 14.7 cents per litre—two cents of that—to go for better transportation and better transit. I'd like to see that put on the sticker at the gas station. That's a dedicated tax, which our government has done, and that starts to flow in October.

I think we also try to protect the independent operator in this bill, because the more independent operators there are out there, the more competition there is. That is also addressed in this bill.

We should also ensure that the government does more generic things to deal with dependency on gasoline, like more long-term solutions. That's why I think it's important for us to push alternate fuels. The oil giants are dragging their feet on supporting our initiatives on ethanol. That has got to be made more readily available. We can't be totally dependent on Ralph Klein and the Middle Eastern countries. We've got to try and keep investing in alternate technology.

We have good hybrid cars for the first time. I don't want to mention names, but I know Toyota has a great little car. The Ministry of the Environment drives one around. Now Ford has a new hybrid SUV, believe it or not. Talk about oxymorons: a hybrid SUV. Anyway, it's coming out in September. It's going to have a huge battery in the back, and it's going to give you enough power to match what you get in a six-cylinder engine. I know the member from Peterborough's looking at buying one later on this fall. So we also have to look beyond dealing with the oil companies and just manage what we can.

This bill, again, is positive. It has got some very concrete steps. I think it deserves our individual support as MPPs to ensure it gets attention at committee, that ministry officials look at it. If you go through each part of it, you may not agree with one aspect of it—the 72 hours—but I think one proposal after the other has an extremely positive suggestion to it that I think deserves consideration because it begins to get rid of the feeling of exploitation. I think sometimes that's what people really get upset about. It's not the fact that we know oil now

costs \$40 a barrel, and the price is going up; they don't see the correlation between what's going on in the barrel cost and what they're paying at the pump. They think there's a lot of manipulation by the big oil companies in between. This bill tries to get rid of that kind of cynicism with more transparency and more openness. I think that's what we can do as a provincial government.

Yes, there are stronger proposals, and I put some forward myself. We all know the trouble is that we can't do everything within our parameters provincially, but this is something we can do. Therefore, let's support this and make sure it goes into committee to get some analysis from ministry officials, industry officials, consumers and independent operators.

I think this is doable piece of legislation that deserves full support. I hope even the media starts talking about positive solutions. This is a positive proposal. Let's support it.

Mr Brown: In coming to speak to this bill, the first thing we really need to do is congratulate the member for Essex for bringing this forward this morning. This is an issue he has pursued with dogged determination for quite some time, as we all have been very concerned about the price and delivery of gasoline across this province.

I represent one of the northern constituencies, and I would note that Mr Crozier, the member for Essex, represents the most southern constituency in the province of Ontario. Detroit would be to his north. So it gives us some sense of how this resonates across the entire province of Ontario.

I did a quick survey of what gasoline prices were over the last 24 hours. I think this will be interesting. I noticed that in Toronto, the lowest price I could find was 72.5 over the last 24 hours, so we made some calls in my constituency to see what those prices were. In Elliot Lake it was 86.4; Bruce Mines, 89.9; Blind River, 89.7; Mindemoya, 91.9; my home, Kagawong, 90.9; Manitouwadge, 94.5; Hornepayne, 93.9; White River, 94.9; Chapleau, 96.9; Wawa, 93.9.

The interesting thing about that is, I think members would have got the sense that there was very close to 25 cents' differential between the lowest price in Toronto and the price in Chapeau. I can account, as the member from Thunder Bay-Superior North has pointed out, for some transportation differences, but you cannot account, no matter how you do it, for a difference of almost 25 cents a litre. That is absolutely absurd.

What we need is a bill like Mr Crozier's, which is suggesting that you have to post prices and you have to post them 72 hours in advance. I go to pick up the mail at Aussie Hunt's in Kagawong and I see flyers in there from the grocery store. It says that if you come on Monday you can buy your cereal for this price. You know it's on sale and on Monday you're going to buy it for this price. It's very clear. It makes for a marketplace where your competition has to meet your price. Everybody knows. The transparency is there. Therefore, you should be able to have a price that is fair to the consumer, at least to the point that he can decide whether he is going to buy that

product on Monday or is going to wait for Friday when there is a sale at a different store. You don't have that choice with gasoline.

I drive probably as much as anybody in this place. I have a daughter who lives near Yonge and St Clair and I've had the same experience. I drove Amy home one evening. She had come for dinner at the apartment. On the way up, I noticed at a gasoline station that the price was such-and-such. I thought, "Gee, I'll stop on the way back to get gasoline." That was a 10-cent-a-litre mistake. You don't want to do that. It's kind of like a lottery when you drive around Ontario trying to guess where the best station is to stop for gas, and at some point you are forced to do it.

This would bring some certainty to the situation, and I think that's what people in Ontario want. They want some certainty. They want some transparency. They understand we cannot control world oil prices. It would be nice if we could, but that is not possible. What we need to be able to do is to say to the people in Chapeau, "The fact that you're paying 25 cents a litre more is just totally unacceptable," and because the oil companies have to give notice, we would know across the province what those prices will be on the following day.

The long weekend is coming. I am very interested to know what the prices will be come June 29 and June 30, in advance of the holiday weekend. I think they might be up. I'm just guessing on that one, and I'm guessing that maybe they might be down again the following Monday. But we're not sure. That's part of the guessing game; it's kind of the excitement. If you use much gasoline, you know it's a problem.

I think all members should know that they should be supporting Mr Crozier's bill this morning and applaud him for his efforts.

I thank you for the time.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Essex has two minutes to reply.

Mr Crozier: Thank you to the members for Parry Sound-Muskoka, Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford, Timmins-James Bay, Beaches-East York, and particularly to Mike, Mike and Mike, from Eglinton-Lawrence, Thunder Bay-Superior North, and Algoma-Manitoulin.

I've been in elected office for almost 20 years, so my skin has grown rather thick and I certainly don't mind some criticism of the bill. I didn't bring it forward thinking it would have unanimous consent, but I do still ask for consideration that you support the bill, because if we can get it to committee and if we can get it looked at there, we can amend it.

The bottom line of all this is, we've tried to get various gasoline bills through two governments now, and, as I said, nothing has been done. It has just been paid lip service. Each of us is trying, in different ways, to get something done. That's what I'm looking for here, to let the driving public know that we really are concerned about the issue and that someone's willing to take on that concern.

This, although it doesn't get to some of the root problems with pricing, at least gives the buying public some

flexibility, some option, some choice. Maybe, because we take this step, it might be a signal to the major oil companies that they'd better just tread carefully or there may be other steps that will be taken or that should be taken.

With that said, I appreciate everybody's comments. I ask for your support when it comes to a vote.

1100

TAXPAYER PROTECTION AFFIRMATION ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 CONFIRMANT LA PROTECTION DES CONTRIBUABLES

Mr Klees moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 85, An Act to affirm the Taxpayer Protection Act, 1999 / Projet de loi 85, Loi visant à confirmer la Loi de 1999 sur la protection des contribuables.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 96, the member has 10 minutes for his presentation.

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I'd like to begin this portion of the debate by reading into the record a portion of the preamble to the bill:

"On September 11, 2003, Dalton McGuinty, before his election as Premier, signed a written pledge 'not to raise taxes or implement a new tax without the explicit consent of the voters' through a referendum as required by the Taxpayer Protection Act, 1999'. He also stated publicly that a government led by him would comply with that act."

That preamble is contained in the bill that I've proposed for debate before the Legislature today. This bill, although entitled An Act to affirm the Taxpayer Protection Act, really could be entitled the integrity act. The reason I say that is that it goes to the heart of this government and this Premier's inability to recognize how important integrity in government is, how important it is for the people of this province to be able to rely on the commitments that are made during an election period, to be able to rely on the commitments of the Premier, who holds the highest office in this province. The role here in the Legislature really is to make laws. So we have a situation in this province where the Premier, the individual whose responsibility it is to make laws, and surely as well to uphold laws, blatantly has broken not only an election promise but, far worse than that, has gone on to break a law of this Parliament that he in fact voted for when he was in the opposition benches.

Essentially, this is a reset bill. It resets the Taxpayer Protection Act to the time in history when Mr McGuinty, then a candidate for the position of Premier, made a very specific commitment to the people of Ontario, and that was that he would keep this law. It includes a provision under which any taxes that may be wrongfully taken by this government, in breach of the Taxpayer Protection Act, will be rebated to Ontarians. It goes on to say very clearly that if this government does wrongfully withhold

taxes under their budget, each individual actually has the right, under the law, to withhold that against any other monies owed to the province.

As I said before, why is this bill even before us today? It really gives us as a Legislature, on what will probably be the last day of sitting in this session before we go into summer recess and back into our constituencies, an opportunity to once again reaffirm, at least on the part of members who will have the courage to vote in favour of this bill, to say to their constituents, the very people who elected them, "I believe in upholding and supporting the law that was created here in this Legislature."

It also gives members here in the House an opportunity to signal clearly to their constituents that they take seriously the trust that the electorate has placed in them to uphold the law. It gives members of the Liberal Party here today, who I know have been under tremendous stress—particularly the member from St Catharines, because I know him to be a man who would want to keep every promise that was made. I know he has been agonizing under the burden that his Premier has placed him under, which is to have to face his constituents, as a long-standing member of this House, and try to justify what this government has done.

It gives members of the Liberal caucus today an opportunity to stand in their place, because this is private members' hour. The role of the government whip is to force, essentially—unfortunately, that's what happens all too often—members to vote against their conscience and in support of a government position. Members of the Liberal Party in this House today have an opportunity to stand in their place and say, "I stand with my constituents and I stand on the principle of integrity." Election campaigns are worthless unless promises are kept. In fact, democracy, I say to you, is worthless and is undermined unless our promises are kept.

I have here a representation of petitions that have been sent to my office—literally thousands of petitions—that are urging our Premier to honour the Taxpayer Protection Act. I want to take this opportunity to thank the many people who have downloaded this petition from my Web site and are, as we speak, having their friends and neighbours sign petitions like this and send them in. They are frustrated because, in addition to signing this petition, what they're asking me is, how can we recall this government? Is there anything at all in Ontario's law that would give us the authority and empower us as constituents, as citizens of this province, to recall this government in whom we've lost absolute trust?

I'd like to thank people like Mr Manser of Kanata; Mr Les Jaworski of Cambridge; Mr and Mrs Groh of Brampton; Mr George Smith of Oakville; Ms Tessa Gardner of Parry Sound; Mrs Eleanor Corbett of Etobicoke; Edwin and Lillian Gemmell of Innisfil; and Mr and Mrs Crawford of Bradford for all of their work. There are hundreds of people like these, who have taken the time to get these petitions signed.

I want to take this opportunity as well to read into the record a letter I received from Angello Capobianco. It says:

"Please read this note in the House ... and ask Mr McGuinty what is he trying to do to the seniors like myself. I also know of others who get pensions and still have to work in order to survive. As for me, with my bad health, I am unable to work and it has become impossible for me to pay my bills.

"All these broken promises, especially the one not to help us seniors with the property tax, which the previous government was willing to do, has made things very difficult for us.

"Thanking you for taking the time to do it."

1110

I do this on behalf of Mr Capobianco, but he is representative of literally hundreds of thousands of people in this province who share the same concern, not only about the additional tax burden they have as a result of this government but because of the lack of integrity of this government to stand behind the very laws of this province that they themselves—many members who now sit on the government benches were in opposition and voted for this bill.

I look forward to hearing my colleagues in this House in their debate. I'll be listening very carefully, as I'm sure people across the province are listening, to what they are telling their constituents about what they believe in terms of integrity in government. That's really the message. Will they be using empty words to simply justify this unjustifiable action on the part of this government? This bill allows this House to rectify, before we go into summer recess, this lack of integrity on the part of this government.

I urge members to consider making their stand on behalf of their constituents, on behalf of democracy, on behalf of this Legislature, on behalf of the integrity of lawmaking and law-keeping in the province of Ontario, and give this bill their vote in principle as we vote on it for second reading today.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): It's always a pleasure to rise and comment on a proposal by the member for Oak Ridges, a member I've had a chance to get to know outside the forum of the Legislature and someone I consider a legislative colleague with whom I look forward to disagreeing passionately without being disagreeable.

The member's principal thesis is that Ontarians must undergo a referendum vote because it's the law. In fact, my colleague frequently repeats this phrase as if to underscore it. The member for Oak Ridges, as a former minister of the crown, will doubtless be familiar with another law: You can't put a "slow moving" sign on a vehicle that isn't slow-moving if you plan to drive on Ontario's highways. A vehicle displaying a "slow moving" sign that isn't slow-moving, that is moving at normal speed, will be stopped and the driver fined. It's the law. On Ontario highways, one-horse open sleighs must have bells attached to the sleigh or to the horse. It's the law, and you can be fined \$5 for disobeying it.

Just because it's the law, nothing prevents the law from being out of date, unworkable or just plain wrong.

So let it be with Bill 85 and the law to which it refers, the Taxpayer Protection Act. The Taxpayer Protection Act is a fundamentally and fatally flawed piece of law. It fails to protect the taxpayers. It failed, for example, to require the previous government to substantiate in any way its claim right up till the date of the election that Ontario's budget was balanced, when subsequent impartial audits found a hidden deficit of at least \$6.2 billion and another \$2 billion hidden in operating deficits and debt of hospitals, of which the only shareholder is the taxpayer of Ontario.

How much is \$6.2 billion? Let's use an analogy. The previous government left a hidden operating deficit which is the equivalent of 60—that's six zero, 60—sponsorship scandals.

You are not allowed to saw wood on the streets or wash your automobile in Toronto. It's the law.

So what do we have a referendum on? Whether the previous government and its ministers should be taken to task for concealing an in-year deficit, an in-year deficit that's in violation of the Taxpayer Protection Act, an in-year deficit that is double our government's 2004-05 operating deficit?

In the state of Pennsylvania, no man may purchase alcohol without the written consent of his wife. It's the law. One wonders if single men may legally purchase alcohol in Pennsylvania.

If the government's 2004-05 budget had demonstrably run a surplus, had the previous government not run the deficit it had, then the sections of Bill 85 requiring a referendum would be built on a foundation of quicksand and the premise of Bill 85 itself would be false and unworkable.

If you happen upon an injured migratory bird in a Canadian national park, you are required to kill it immediately or face a fine of \$300. It's the law.

One wonders how the referendum question proposed by Bill 85 might read, so let's try a draft: "The government of Ontario has introduced a measure to fund Ontario health care that raises dedicated revenue in an amount equal to about one quarter of the hidden deficit left by the previous government, about which Ontarians and the government they elected could not know and about which the former government steadfastly concealed details. Should sanctions be applied retroactively against the former government and the members of its executive council? Yes or no?"

You cannot release 10 or more helium-filled balloons in any city of Toronto park within a 24-hour period. It's the law.

There are many other provisions of Bill 85 that make no sense. In essence, it says the government must cause a referendum to occur in Ontario if the Ministry of Finance proposes to do anything with taxes other than to lower or eliminate them. For example, selling and leasing back all of Ontario's hospitals would be a dumb idea and definitely not a way to protect taxpayers, who would then be at the mercy of private health insurers, whose proven insatiable appetite for consumer premium income is on

display every day in the United States. But turning a public asset into a private user fee is just fine under the Taxpayer Protection Act. It may be ridiculous, but it's the law.

Canadian law states that no person shall offer a reward for lost or stolen property if promising that no questions will be asked. It's the law.

So despite the respect I have for the abilities of the member from Oak Ridges, and in deference to his solid commitment to the core values and principles that drive him in this Legislature, I cannot support him on Bill 85. However, I thank him for bringing Bill 85 to the floor of the Legislature, where the serious and fatal shortcomings of the Taxpayer Protection Act can be discussed.

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): Bill 85 deals in part with the Liberal health tax. There's little doubt that the recent Ontario budget calls for a health premium that kicks in July 1. It represents a new tax, and it's a new tax that the Premier must bring to a referendum in accordance with his signed commitment to the Taxpayer Protection Act. That's the law.

As people across Ontario and across Canada prepare to vote for those who will represent them on the national stage, many will be looking to lessons learned here in Ontario, and as they mark their ballots, many will wonder if the government they choose will keep commitments made during this election campaign.

As we've seen in Ontario, the road leading from the election trail to a government seat has been a long one for Liberal members, a road that's littered with empty words and broken promises and broken laws. In my riding, people are asking me if they can trust politicians when Liberals have made it clear that honesty is no longer part of the job description. They remember a Liberal leader who on their television sets last September said, "I won't cut your taxes, but I won't raise them either." They remember that same man sitting down on September 11 to sign a written pledge not to raise taxes or implement a new tax without the explicit consent of the voters. That was a law. He gave his word. He put his name on the line. He's now flushing his commitment and potentially this province down the toilet.

The Premier is confused as to just what a tax is and just what is the law. According to the Merriam Webster Dictionary, a tax is defined in two ways: "(a) a charge, usually of money, imposed by authority on persons or property for public purposes; (b) a sum levied on members of an organization to defray expenses." The Cambridge Dictionary holds that "a tax is an amount of money paid to the government which is based on your income or the cost of goods and services you have bought." As an example, Cambridge uses some phrases to explain this: "They're putting the tax on cigarettes," and "Tax cuts are always popular." They use that as a way of explaining what a tax is. Clearly, in accordance with these definitions, there's little doubt that the health premium is indeed a tax, as defined in this present law.

1120

Just in case there's any confusion, I'll refer to Bill 83, the Budget Measures Act. Section 17 states—it was right

there in black and white—"... establish a new tax called the Ontario health premium...." If there was any doubt whatsoever that Liberals are breaking the law, the pledge, with this health premium, their own legislation clearly underlines the new tax and the latest in a line of new broken promises that this health premium represents.

My fellow committee member, the member from Durham, and I put forward a number of amendments to try and clarify, to bring some accuracy into section 17. We submitted amendments with respect to this health premium, health tax phrase. One of them we referred to as the Liberal-is-a-Liberal tax. We also put forward an amendment to rename it the Paul-Martin-made-me-do-it tax. Despite these best efforts, section 17 still reads: "... a new tax called the Ontario health premium...."

I'm confused. The Premier clearly signed a pledge to not raise taxes or implement new taxes without a referendum. The health premium is clearly a tax. These two facts are clear, and yet, if we take these two facts to their logical conclusion, things begin to go off the tracks, because every time it's brought up, the Liberals tell us there is no referendum being planned. Again, I'm asked by people: "How could this be?" To that conclusion, the Premier was—and I have to say it, Premier—they say, lying, he was lying down on the job when it came to maintaining the integrity of a political leader.

The Acting Speaker: I would ask the member for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant to withdraw the unparliamentary term.

Mr Barrett: I will withdraw the fact that the Premier was lying down on the job when it came to maintaining the integrity.

The Acting Speaker: I would ask the member to withdraw, without qualification, the unparliamentary term.

Mr Barrett: I will withdraw the first sentence with respect to lying, as lying down on the job.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): It's again a privilege to stand here and debate this particular motion that has been put forward by the member for Oak Ridges.

The Taxpayer Protection Act: If ever there was an act that was passed in this Legislature, it was an act that was doomed from the beginning. It was an act that has had nothing but a stormy history since 1999. If we take ourselves back to the time when it was debated in this Legislature, when people from all of the parties, as they then were in this Legislature, stood up to talk about why it was necessary to have a Taxpayer Protection Act, and if you read that history, you will see that every single Conservative voted for that act and, surprisingly, every single Liberal voted for that act as well. It was only the New Democrats who said, "This is not going to work."

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): The Liberals voted for it?

Mr Prue: Yes, the Liberals voted for it. It was the New Democrats who said that this is not going to work, for a couple of reasons. Number one is because we often have cyclical periods in the economies of the province,

Canada and, indeed, the world, and it's not going to work because you cannot hamstring future governments, future cabinets from doing what is best in terms of the economic circumstances that exist at that time. Notwithstanding that we gave sage advice, the Legislature chose to pass this act.

Having passed the act, the amazing thing has happened: Within a couple of years, the very Conservatives who passed the act were the first to break their own legislation. They did so, of course, in the year 2002, when they stood during the budget to announce that they were not going to implement the very budget measures which they were bound to in the act. They called it a delay, but the reality was that they were disobeying their own act.

It was kind of amazing to watch in the last election, because the Conservatives, of course, signed the Taxpayer Protection Act in that famous opportunity, but they were upstaged by the Liberals, who beat them to it with a full news conference in signing that there would be a balanced budget.

I had to smile when I saw that. There, of course, was the Premier, or the man who was going to become the Premier, standing there surrounded by a cadre of Liberal candidates from around the province with big smiles on their faces for what they were going to do and how they were going to uphold the Taxpayer Protection Act that they had always supported, that they had voted for, and that they were going to implement. I had to especially smile, of course, because my Liberal opponent in that campaign was sitting beside Dalton McGuinty when he actually signed the papers.

Now we have what is happening here today. Within two years, we have the Conservatives who break the act and we have the Liberals who are not obeying the act which they supported and which they signed with much fanfare, in the heat of a provincial election. I want to tell you that this smacks of—I don't know. I think it was foolishness, if I can use that word. I hope it's not unparliamentary. It was foolishness on the part of those people to say that they would uphold such an act, knowing the circumstances that Ontario was finding itself in.

I take you back to the period when we knew that the province was not going to be able to balance its budget. We knew that, and so did everyone else who commented, everyone from the Fraser Institute to Gerry Phillips, people in this Legislature. Everyone knew that the budget was not going to be balanced. Conservatives knew it; Liberals knew it; New Democrats knew it. It was foolish for any party to have signed such a pledge in the leadup to the election.

You campaigned as a party, and initially as a government, as if you would do the impossible. You were saying you were going to make all of these promises and do good things that needed to be done, some of which I share to this day with you, but you said you were going to do it without raising taxes and that you were going to follow the Taxpayer Protection Act. It was one of the

first promises that you broke. In fact, it was a promise we knew you had to break.

I don't know what else you could have done. If you could tell me what else you could have done, I'm sure you would have done it. To listen to Minister Sorbara in the finance committee over the last two days, he said it was the most difficult thing he has ever had to do in his political life, to stand up and break the key promise that he made and that his party made during the election.

Here's the scenario we have, and it's kind of bizarre: We have the new Bill 83, which has just been forced into law—the only bill that this government saw fit to invoke closure on since the last election. You've invoked closure. It's rather arcane wording, but I'd like to read it into the record so people watching can see this:

"Section 2 of the Taxpayer Protection Act, 1999, as amended by the Statutes of Ontario, 2002, chapter 8, schedule L, section 1, is amended by adding the following subsection:

"(7) Despite subsection (1), the following provisions may be included in a bill that receives first reading in 2004:

"1. A provision that amends the Income Tax Act to establish a new tax called the Ontario health premium in English and contribution-santé de l'Ontario in French."

That, in a nutshell, was going around the Taxpayer Protection Act. What it did, in effect, is establish that the health premium, which has a very strange-sounding, almost Harrisonian ring about it—like the Tenant Protection Act that doesn't protect tenants, this is a health premium that is not a premium but is in fact a tax. Here we are debating whether or not you as a government are following the laws. Well, I'll tell you, you don't like this law now that you have to live with it. So now we have Bill 84, which is on the books, on which we're waiting, and Bill 84 completely undoes what you promised to do in the election and what you voted for in this very Legislature a scant five years ago.

1130

Subsection 4(1) of Bill 84 says it all, and I'd like to read that into the record, because this is what this government intends to do. Notwithstanding the debate here today, notwithstanding what they told the electors of Ontario last September and October, notwithstanding what they voted for in 1999, the true intent is to do the following:

"4(1) For each fiscal year, the executive council shall plan for a balanced budget unless, as a result of extraordinary circumstances, the executive council determines that it is consistent with prudent fiscal policy for the province to have a deficit for a fiscal year."

What that means is that we are going to go back full circle, because that is in effect what the policy, the practice and the law was in Ontario for the first 120-some years since Confederation. That is the way the law read, that governments consistently tried to come up with a balanced budget unless circumstances would not allow for them to have a balanced budget. The Liberals are going back to where we were before and, quite frankly,

where any government should be going, because you cannot bind a government in the first year of its mandate to a balanced budget. You cannot expect, through good political practice, that they will follow that throughout the mandate.

That is what we expect of politicians. We do not expect politicians to make irrational, crazy promises during the heat of a campaign which they should know full well, and which I believe they did know full well, could not be met during the course of their mandate.

Now we have a motion here today put forward by the member for Oak Ridges that says you should do what you promised to do. How can anyone disagree with that?

Interjection.

Mr Prue: And hold the referendum. How can anyone disagree with that? You promised to do it.

On the other hand, I have to be rational and I have to be reasonable. I never expected you to do it. Maybe the public expected you to do it, but people who were around this House and who knew the political realities and the economic realities of Ontario knew you could never do it and that you had no intention of doing it.

Mr Klees: They could have a referendum tomorrow. You know that.

Mr Prue: Yes, they could have a referendum tomorrow. Yes, I agree they could have, but I also know—

Mr Klees: That's all I'm saying.

Mr Prue: Yes, I know what you're saying and I agree with what you're saying, and I'm probably going to vote for your motion.

Mr Klees: Thank you.

Mr Prue: But I want to tell you, because I think this government should have to be bound by the promises they made. People expect that. But the reality is that you're going to go back in Bill 84, which I assume is going to be passed this year—probably not till the fall, but certainly in time for the next budget debate, when you probably will again not balance the budget because there are many pressures there that seem to indicate to me that it cannot be done in the second year of your mandate as well. You are going to pass this to make sure you're not asked this same question next year.

The reality is that this is a political motion, which I wanted to finish with. This is a political motion being put forward by a member of the official opposition to embarrass the government, and quite frankly, you should be embarrassed. You should be sitting over there saying, "Why did I do something as foolish as I did? Why did I allow my party to make promises that could not be met? Why did I support a bill initially which is going to hamstring me? Why, oh why, am I here? How, oh how, can I get out of it?" You've answered that by introducing Bill 84, and we know how you're going to get out of it. But the reality is that this government has a lot to answer for.

I've only got three minutes left, but I am going to sit here in rapt attention as speakers from the governing party stand up and explain why they should not follow what they promised to do in the last election. I am going

to sit here in rapt attention as speaker after speaker tries to blame the former government for having run a deficit.

There's no doubt in my mind that they ran that deficit. There's no doubt that Mr Peters was right in his report. But there is also no doubt in anyone's mind in this Legislature that you should have known the reality of what you were going into. You should have known the reality. Certainly Gerry Phillips knew it. Certainly—

Mr John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex): He didn't know it.

Mr Prue: He knew it.

Mr Wilkinson: He speculated.

Mr Prue: OK, he speculated, but you should have been watching that speculation. You should have listened to that man who sat on the finance committee for years and certainly was the voice and the conscience of your party. You chose not to do it because you wanted to see the world in rose-coloured glasses. It's going to be very interesting in the next little bit to see how you explain away all of this, because I will tell you, going from door to door, as I am wont to do, even helping my federal friends, the biggest issue at the door in this federal election is the provincial health tax. That's the biggest issue in the—

Mr Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): You're knocking on the wrong doors.

Mr Prue: No, I'm knocking on doors in Beaches-East York, and the single biggest issue as I go from door to door is the provincial health tax and the fact that they believe this government, this newly minted government, was not brutally honest with the people. They feel they were misled. The reality is that they were expecting something very different than what they got.

In conclusion, having listened so far to the debate, having listened to what the member from Oak Ridges had to say, and in an attempt to bring some kind of—I don't know—some kind of contrition to this government, I think we need to hear what they have to say. If they do not have a firm rationale for not holding the referendum, I believe they should be bound by their very words, and I'm going to ask them to bind themselves. If they want to stand up and say that they are not going to be bound by those words, that they are not going to be beholden and that they are in fact going to change the Taxpayer Protection Act—which they have, up until this time, always supported—then they are going to have to explain and convince the people of Ontario why Bill 84 is the new answer, why they have gone full circle back to the way governments operated before 1999, and why that bill is going to give some kind of guarantee to the people of Ontario that they are good for their word, that they will do everything possible to balance their budget and that they will not continue to waste taxpayers' funds.

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I'm certainly pleased to join in the debate with my colleague from Oak Ridges on his bill, which I think is a very appropriate bill. Frank Klees is a man of integrity, and I can tell you that this is an issue all about integrity.

It's about accountability and it's about what happened in the previous election.

Prior to the election, the Taxpayer Protection Act, 1999, was passed by this Legislature with full approval of the Liberal official opposition at that time. We know, as the member has stated, that during the campaign it was very clearly stated by the Premier, in writing and verbally, and recorded, that he was not going to increase taxes. In fact, what he implicitly said was that he was not going to do anything to the Taxpayer Protection Act, 1999.

If he had said to the public, who were looking for full information in terms of how they were going to cast their ballot, that he was going to repeal the Taxpayer Protection Act and that he was going to do the things that have currently occurred with respect to the OHIP premium, which is now viewed and is clearly set in statute as a tax that is going to be collected through the Income Tax Act, I think the public would have had a much clearer and more transparent view of what was happening out there in terms of what the Liberal government of the day was running on. But, as we know, that wasn't the case. What we're faced with now is legislation to repeal the Taxpayer Protection Act with respect to making sure that the tax premiums can come into place. So the OHIP tax premium for the public comes into place July 1 of this year. It's going to be collected off your wages. It's going to be collected off pensioners' pensions. It's going to be a tax. It's going to be something that people are not going to be happy with, because we did get rid of the OHIP premium back in 1989 and it was brought back in without consultation by this government. All the member from Oak Ridges is asking for is accountability to make sure this doesn't come in without going to the public with respect to what they want.

1140

I also want to refer to an article by Linda Leatherdale in today's Toronto Sun, where she's quoted about this health tax. She says:

"First, it's not a health premium; it's an income tax that will be deducted from our paycheques under income taxes, so we will never know how much is actually the health levy.

"We do know, thanks to the ... budget, that how much we pay a year goes from \$300 on incomes of \$25,001 to \$36,000; \$750 on incomes of \$72,601 to \$200,000, and \$900 for incomes over \$200,000—all while important services like eye exams, physiotherapy and chiropractic treatments are delisted," and, in effect, privatized.

"Yet how do we know this new tax revenue will go to health care, as McGuinty promises us?....

"And, just how many health taxes do we need in Ontario—especially when leaders fighting for the Prime Minister's seat are promising more health care dollars.

"In Ontario, we're already paying the Fair Share health levy, and employers with payrolls over \$400,000 are paying the employer health tax (EHT).

"But it gets worse: A circular by Mercer Human Resource Consulting warns the Liberals are hoping to

squeeze another \$1.24 billion from Ontarians in the next four years by hiring more tax auditors to make sure we don't cheat."

Now, I know that's something that the Liberals didn't fib about during the campaign. They basically indicated to the public that they were going to be hiring more tax auditors because they wanted to make sure they got their fair share of taxes. What we're going to see is a campaign to ensure that taxes of fair-minded Ontario citizens of all accounts are going to be hounded by the tax office. So we're not only going to have increased taxes; we're also going to have a campaign of going after taxpayers in terms of getting as much money into the government coffers to do who knows what.

The bottom line, in closing, is that the member from Oak Ridges has it right. We have a problem here of accountability. We have a government that is now changing legislation to fit their mandate. They should have said what they were doing during the campaign. I can guarantee you, there would have been a different view from the public with respect to this government's mandate.

Mr Wilkinson: I want to speak briefly to this bill, because there's just one simple point I have to make. I read the member from Oak Ridges' bill. In it, he says that the reasons for us to pass his bill "include protecting the right of the taxpayers of Ontario to receive government that is fiscally prudent and accountable to them, and ensuring the integrity of the political process...."

Mr Speaker, I want you to know that the member from Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant said something that was unparliamentary. I don't want to go into the weeds; all I can tell you is that I know the word "hypo" is parliamentary and I know the word "critical" is parliamentary. Those two words, "hypo" and "critical," are both parliamentary. Maybe the combination of those words is not parliamentary, but "hypo" and "critical" are both parliamentary terms. There are some critical hypos in Ontario, when we find out that the previous government is walking in here and telling us that somehow this is fiscally responsible.

There is a grand urban myth that has been promoted across the land that the Leader of the Opposition of the day—my leader, Dalton McGuinty—was somehow supposed to know about the fiscal state of the books coming out of that famous Belinda budget over at the Magna plant that never went through this House; that somehow he, and only he, was supposed to know the fiscal state of the balance of this province; that the Premier of Ontario, Mr Eves, and the Minister of Finance, Mrs Ecker, didn't have to know that there was a secret \$6.2-billion deficit but the opposition was somehow supposed to know this. So for my friend the member from Oak Ridges to come in here and say, "We have this sheen, this patina, of respectability, and we are the people in charge of setting this higher standard"—I can't believe that. I think there are critical hypos all across Ontario on that grand urban myth.

I'm a certified financial planner and I can tell you that the Taxpayer Protection Act gives a perverse incentive to government to spend money. It doesn't say to govern-

ment, "If you're having a good year, put a little aside for a rainy day." What it says is, "You'd better spend all the money. Don't put it down against any deficit and save the interest and save the cash flow." I tell people to pay down their debt. Instead, this bill says that government should spend all the money. So we saw this drunken spending of money at the end of the last term of the dying government of the day, the Harris-Eves government, and what did we end up with? We ended up with critical hypos all across the province.

I can tell you that as a member of the government I won't be supporting this bill, despite my friendship with the member from Oak Ridges.

I want to leave good time for my fellow member the member from Ottawa-Orléans just to deal with this issue itself.

Mr Phil McNeely (Ottawa-Orléans): Mr Speaker, I'll be sharing my time with the member for St Catharines.

I'm pleased to rise today to speak against Bill 85. Tough decisions were needed to clean up the mess left to us by the former government of Ontario. Imagine, in good times, in spite of former Minister Ecker saying to the estimates committee on June 2, 2003, according to the Hansard record, that they would be paying down debt of \$5 billion and that they would have a balanced budget in 2003-04—and that was one quarter of the way through that year—what they did was leave a deficit of \$6 billion. They were \$6 billion out, plus what they intended to pay down on the debt.

If we go by the record of that legislative committee, the standing committee on estimates, our member Mr Phillips chased the Minister of Finance through about eight pages trying to get her to tell us what the assets were that the government was going to sell. Of course, she couldn't come up with any assets that they were going to sell that they were going to balance the budget with. And of course, it wasn't \$2.2 billion that they were missing, as she said; it was over \$6 billion.

In good times, Conservatives added \$25 billion to the debt of Ontario, and at the same time our Prime Minister Martin paid down the Canadian debt by over \$50 billion. This government took on \$25 billion worth of additional debt while the federal government, properly run, paid down \$50 billion.

In addition to the additional debt taken on in the eight years of Tory government—and this interests me, as an engineer—the schools need \$8 billion worth of maintenance. Roads and bridges: You didn't realize that when you were Minister of Transportation, but roads and bridges require \$6 billion. It's true. They're unsafe; they became unsafe through your eight years. We have a lot of things. Energy generation was set back eight years by the minister of lost generation, who is my neighbour in Nepean-Carleton. He put the province into the dark ages. Remember last August. You bled the infrastructure of this province at the same time.

You left us a mess. I think we could call this bill the "clean up the Tory fiscal mess act." That would be the

proper name for it. We're going ahead, cleaning up your mess, and we had to do it through Bill 83.

Ms Laurie Scott (Haliburton-Victoria-Brock): I'm pleased today to rise to speak in favour of Bill 85, introduced by my colleague from Oak Ridges. The intent of the bill is very simple, for you people over on the other side. It would create a reset mechanism that would override Premier McGuinty's attempt to rewrite the Taxpayer Protection Act to bypass the referendum requirement. Taxpayers would be eligible for a refund on any money collected prior to the required referendum.

I know the members opposite, at least those who showed up to vote in favour of their budget—there are at least a few of you over there who felt a few qualms about renegeing on your promise to abide by the Taxpayer Protection Act, especially the ones who here before October 2, who voted at one point in support of the act.

The Taxpayer Protection Act provisions requiring a referendum could easily have been met. When the firestorm erupted because of your unwillingness to stand by your promises, you could have responded quickly by saying you were prepared to take the issue to the people. Who knows what may have happened? You might have won—I somehow doubt it—but we're never going to know.

1150

Back in October of last year, it was quite an age of innocence here at Queen's Park. You hadn't yet begun to break your campaign promises. You also introduced the democratic renewal secretariat, to great fanfare. I'm going to read a quote from an October 23, 2003, press release from the Premier's office: "It's time to restore people's faith, bring our 19th-century democratic traditions into the 21st century and bring citizens—especially young people—back to the centre of politics."

This, of course, was before your government broke faith with the people of Ontario, breaking promise after promise. Your press release spoke of "consulting with the people of Ontario," and you're not going to consult with the people of Ontario. That was one of your central planks in your election campaign. You claim to have a mandate for change, but I don't think the people who voted for you could possibly have envisioned your total disregard for their desire that taxes not be raised. That's what I hear at the doorsteps.

All the while the finance minister was starting to plan how to backtrack from one of the signature promises of your campaign. You can toss numbers around all day and discuss who knew what and when they knew it and how big the magical increasing deficit really was, but it's clear to even the most casual observer that your leader, in the middle of the campaign, signed the taxpayer protection pledge.

Eight years of having a government that kept its word might have played a part, too. Taxpayers across the province thought your word would be your bond. Part of that promise you made to the people of Ontario was that you would hold a referendum if you planned to raise taxes.

I think everyone in the House would agree that it is important to protect the rights of our taxpayers of Ontario. It's one of the reasons our constituents sent us to this place. Ontarians ought to be able to expect that their government will be fiscally prudent and accountable to them. The government of Ontario ought to keep its promise on fiscal matters. What can be wrong with that? If you're going to raise taxes, you should, as you promised during the election, go to the people of Ontario and ask for their permission.

The increase in taxes, user fees and the delisting of health services are all of critical importance to thousands of Ontarians and will ultimately put a financial strain on our working families the likes of which we have not seen in over a decade.

People across the province, across my riding, would like to have a chance to let your government know what they think of your budget and what they think of your new health care premium. People are going to have to make changes in their lifestyles in order to pay.

I want to share with you the other wrong-headed decision, the decision the government used to delist medical services. In the Lindsay Post today, "Optometrist Says Delisting Will Increase Wait Times." I thought your goal was to decrease wait times. Dr David "Stone has joined the Ontario Association of Optometrists in urging the provincial government to change its mind regarding delisting the services...."

I want to stand in support of this bill today. I know I'm running out of time, but more people from my riding—Joyce Bartley from Norland needs a chiropractor and will be missing work. Long-term pain in their pocketbooks; long-term physical pain. No matter what you want to spin in your budget, it's not long-term gain, it's short-term gain. It's less health care, fewer services, and we're paying more.

The Liberal election platform documents state, "We will live by the balanced budget law," and, "We will comply with the Taxpayer Protection Act and balanced budget legislation, not bend the law at whim." These are very good sentiments we should be paying attention to here today. I urge you to join in supporting the bill from the member from Oak Ridges.

Hon James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism and Recreation): I remember so well the Magna budget where the Conservative government said they had a balanced budget and wanted the people of this province to believe it. I must recognize that they have more nerve than a canal horse to be bringing forward a resolution of this kind today. I well recall that when the Liberal plan was developed, the Premier of this province of today was obsessive about the fact that the budget should be balanced and that there would not be a need for tax increases. He based that, even taking into consideration that there might be a \$2-billion deficit.

I agree with John Tory, the candidate running for the leadership of the Conservative Party, who says that the previous government should have been honest about the financial situation in the province.

This is what some credible people had to say. This is after the Provincial Auditor, who is completely neutral, came in and said, "By the way, the budget isn't balanced. It's a \$5.6-billion deficit at least, and there are other hidden deficits at hospitals and family and children's services," and things of that nature that would bring it to over \$6 billion.

Based on the plan of the previous government, even with a \$2-billion deficit built in—in other words, not believing they had a planned budget—David Hall, Vista Economics, former senior economist, Bank of Montreal, said, "...in my professional opinion, your fiscal plan produces at least balanced budgets and a prudent reserve every year."

Jack Marmer, forensic accountant: "I conducted a detailed, line-by-line review with your staff. To do this, I spent about 70 hours. I agree both with their methodology and the costs determined as a result of the application of that methodology...."

Warren Jestin, senior vice-president and chief economist, Scotiabank: "After examining the program details, I believe that it is a workable plan for our province ... your commitment to balancing the budget is both reassuring and an essential ingredient in successful long-term fiscal planning."

All of these individuals looked at the Liberal plan that was developed very carefully, even building in the fact that the government might be fudging its figures by some \$2 billion. On that basis, it would not have called for a budget to be unbalanced—in other words, a deficit. It would not have called for the need for any new revenue measures on the part of this government.

By opening the can, we find it's a can of worms that the previous government has left. I've heard the term "liars" applied on many occasions. I'm not implying it. I've heard the term "liars" applied—

The Acting Speaker: I'd ask the Minister of Tourism and Recreation to withdraw. You can't say indirectly what I wouldn't allow you to say directly.

Hon Mr Bradley: The people who have not provided the accurate information for this province are in fact—

The Acting Speaker: The minister for—
Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: I'll give you extra time. The minister has not yet withdrawn what I asked him to withdraw.

Hon Mr Bradley: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I have withdrawn that.

Those who have provided inaccurate information in this province are in fact those who were part of the previous government. That is why we're in the financial jam we're in in the province of Ontario. You have more nerve than a canal horse over there to be critical of this government.

The Acting Speaker: You have two minutes to reply, member for Oak Ridges.

Mr Klees: In the dying hours of this legislative session, we've heard from the Liberal members opposite. They are reaffirming with the people of this province that

they care nothing about the truth and that they are going to continue to justify to the people of this province—I listened to speaker after speaker, and instead of acknowledging the fact that they should have kept the law, they have made light of what is taking place in this House.

They are going back to their constituencies over the summer. They will find out from their constituents. If they don't want to listen to us here in the House, they'll hear it on the doorsteps and they'll hear it at the picnics they go to that the people of this province have lost trust in them.

By listening to the debate here today, what we have heard is such an absolute lack of integrity that the people of this province will send a very strong message. I'm disappointed, I'm extremely disappointed, because they have an opportunity to take a stand.

Nothing in this bill speaks to the fact of a deficit. What this bill simply states is the one promise this government could have kept, and that is simply to go back to the people of Ontario with a referendum asking their opinion, which is what the law states. That is it. It costs you nothing. But you've refused to do even that.

Once again, you've broken the law, you've broken trust, you've broken faith. The people of this province will not forget.

The Acting Speaker: The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

GASOLINE CONSUMER PROTECTION ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 SUR LA PROTECTION DES CONSOMMATEURS D'ESSENCE

The Acting Speaker (Mr Ted Arnott): We will first deal with ballot item number 29, standing in the name of Mr Crozier.

Mr Crozier has moved second reading of Bill 80, An Act to provide information to consumers respecting the price of gasoline and the ownership of gasoline retailers and to require certain additional information from major oil companies.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

I declare the motion carried.

Pursuant to standing order 96, the bill is referred to the committee of the whole House.

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): I ask consent that the bill be sent to the new justice policy committee.

The Acting Speaker: Shall the bill be referred to the standing committee on justice policy? Agreed?

All those in favour of the question will please rise and remain standing.

The majority is in favour. The bill is referred to the committee on justice policy.

TAXPAYER PROTECTION
AFFIRMATION ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 CONFIRMANT LA
PROTECTION DES CONTRIBUABLES

The Acting Speaker (Mr Ted Arnott): Now we deal with the second ballot item, ballot item number 30.

Mr Klees has moved second reading of Bill 85, An Act to affirm the Taxpayer Protection Act, 1999.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1202 to 1207.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time and be counted.

Ayes

Barrett, Toby
Hardeman, Ernie
Klees, Frank
Miller, Norm

O'Toole, John
Prue, Michael
Runciman, Robert W.
Scott, Laurie

Sterling, Norman W.
Tascona, Joseph N.
Witmer, Elizabeth
Yakubski, John

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be counted.

Nays

Arthurs, Wayne
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Brown, Michael A.
Brownell, Jim
Caplan, David
Colle, Mike
Craitor, Kim
Crozier, Bruce
Delaney, Bob
Di Cocco, Caroline
Duncan, Dwight
Fonseca, Peter

Gerretsen, John
Gravelle, Michael
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Leal, Jeff
Levac, Dave
Marsales, Judy
McMeekin, Ted
McNeely, Phil
Milloy, John
Mitchell, Carol
Mossop, Jennifer F.
Parsons, Ernie

Peters, Steve
Phillips, Gerry
Pupatello, Sandra
Ramal, Khalil
Rinaldi, Lou
Sandals, Liz
Sergio, Mario
Smitherman, George
Van Bommel, Maria
Watson, Jim
Wilkinson, John
Wynne, Kathleen O.

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 12; the nays are 36.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

All matters relating to private members' public business having now been completed, I do now leave the chair. The House will resume sitting at 1:30 pm.

The House recessed from 1209 to 1330.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

STUDENT BUSING

Ms Laurie Scott (Haliburton-Victoria-Brock): I rise today to draw your attention to a matter that I believe the Minister of Education needs to address. We wrote him to express our support for the students and families of Carden and Dalton in their efforts to continue to send

their children to schools within the Simcoe County District School Board.

On March 9, Garfield Dunlop and I wrote to the minister, asking for help to resolve the student busing issue. We asked the minister for assistance. We asked him about a 2003 regulation, introduced by the Progressive Conservative government, that was to be reintroduced and considered by cabinet this past spring.

On May 3, I asked the minister a question in the Legislature. He replied, "I undertake to the member opposite that we are exploring that now and will report back to her further on our success, in terms of both dialoguing with the board and looking at how provincial rules may have brought a part of this situation about."

Garfield Dunlop has also been working very hard to try to resolve the matter for students. He has also risen in this House to mention it on several occasions.

It is now June 24, and still we have heard nothing from this minister. The parents and school boards have heard nothing from this minister. Calls to his office have only confirmed for us that our letter has been received and a response is being worked on.

It is time to start putting students first. The parents, students and school boards are all waiting for the minister to respond. It has been almost four months. The school year is drawing to an end and still nobody has any more information than they did in March.

ONTARIO RANGERS

Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough): It's my pleasure to rise in the House today to announce that 2004 marks the 60th anniversary of the Ontario Ranger program, formerly known as Junior Rangers. I'm pleased to have this opportunity today to extend an invitation to all former Rangers to join me and natural resources minister David Ramsay, who himself is a former Ranger, at the Ranger reunion on August 7 and 8 at Trent University in the wonderful riding of Peterborough.

Since 1944, more than 75,000 young Ontarians have spent a memorable summer working as Rangers. I'm sure there are members in this House today who enjoyed that experience. For many young people, working at a Ranger camp was their introduction to Ontario's wilderness. It was where they first witnessed the beauty and power in nature and learned the concept of resource stewardship. For most, it was an unforgettable lesson in the importance of nature and a healthy environment. For some, it was a life-changing experience that sent them on a path to a career in resource management.

Today, the program provides close to 400 job opportunities every summer for 17-year-old high school students. Today's Rangers can be found working in provincial parks and on ministry forestry, fish, wildlife and mapping projects right across Ontario. They plant and prune trees. They clear trails, build campsites and help restore fish and wildlife habitat. Many of us who enjoy Ontario's outdoors benefit from their work every year.

We should all be proud of this program and its continued commitment to providing job opportunities and unique work experiences for Ontario's young people. The spirit and enthusiasm that has kept the Ontario Ranger program going for 60 years has helped strengthen our communities, our environment, our lakes and rivers, our fish and wildlife habitat and our air and water quality.

I trust that 60 years from now, this wonderful program will still be providing generations of young people with a better understanding of and appreciation for the magnificent natural heritage of our province.

PKU AND FABRY'S DISEASE

Mrs Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): PKU and Fabry's disease are two severe health conditions that affect Ontarians and create extreme financial hardship because of the cost to cover medicinal and dietary patient needs.

PKU is a rare metabolic disorder that causes a chemical imbalance in the blood sufficient to result in permanent damage to the brain. Since 1965, screening for PKU has been provided to all newborns within the first 28 days of being born. Since then, the province has instituted legislation that provides funding for medicines and the special diets for those with PKU up to the age of 18. However, this does not recognize the fact that even past the age of 18, persons with PKU still need to stay on this diet or they will become ill. It is not reasonable to expect persons with PKU to be able to afford the \$28,000 per year in medicinal costs for PKU drugs.

The application for extended coverage of PKU beyond the age of 18 has been submitted to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. They were told they would receive a response by the end of March, and as yet they have received no response.

Fabry's disease is a rare genetic disorder that results in stroke, cardiac arrest and kidney failure. The government has committed to fund it until June 15, and again, no response.

I would urge the Minister of Health to demonstrate compassion and let the people with PKU and Fabry's disease know about the funding arrangements.

GAY PRIDE WEEK

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): This is Gay Pride Week. I look forward, as I always do, to the dyke parade on Saturday and the big parade where millions of people come out on Saturday, and to the church. Jack Layton will be there; our leader, Howard Hampton, I believe will be there; and David Miller, our mayor, will be there. Of course, it's also the day when Brent Hawkes from the Metropolitan church holds a big service on the street. As always, it's very inspiring. The Metropolitan church is in my riding, and I must say I would invite anybody to attend a service at this church.

I want to point out to the government as we enter into Pride Week that it's been a year plus some weeks since

the Halpern decision in recognition of same-sex spousal marriage, but the Attorney General, after promising, I understand, has yet to see to it that dozens of Ontario statutes are amended to reflect this landmark court decision. I would say to the government, just get on with it. You have the New Democratic Party's full support and, I would hope, the Conservative Party's support as well.

The other thing is the government's last-minute intervention in the Hislop ruling, in which it is siding with the federal Liberal government and saying that CPP survivor benefits for same-sex partners should not be retroactive to April 1985. That's the time when many partners of many of our friends died tragically from HIV and AIDS. They should not be doing this, and I hope they will reverse their decision.

Happy Pride Week to everybody.

SAUNDERS SECONDARY SCHOOL

Mr Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe): I want to stand today in this House and offer my congratulations to the staff and students of Saunders Secondary School in London, Ontario, on the recent success of their cancer society fundraiser.

In April and May of this year, the students of Saunders Secondary School took part in the school's annual Canadian Cancer Society fundraiser. Three years ago, the students raised \$10,000; last year, they raised \$20,000; and this year, led by Saunders teachers Jamie Clark and Michael Deeb, and student organizer Brynne Gilmore, the school was able to raise \$44,000 for the cancer society.

They raised the money through classroom competitions, student-teacher basketball games, and shop students did oil changes for \$40 apiece. As well, the school raffled off a 2004 Pontiac Sunfire provided to the school by the Brian Finch Pontiac Buick GMC dealership of London.

I'm glad our government is committed to helping students like those at Saunders succeed through student success rescue teams so that more students can take a leadership role in their school and help create opportunities and build stronger communities.

I congratulate everyone at Saunders school on their amazing campaign results and thank them for helping to fund the research needed that will some day lead to a cure for cancer.

1340

DISTRICT OF MUSKOKA

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): On Monday, my riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka played host to Paul Martin, Prime Minister of Canada. Mr Martin said that as a child he looked forward to coming to Muskoka, and he went on to say, "As far as I'm concerned, when I came up here, I was coming to northern Ontario ... unless there has been some tectonic shift in

the pre-Cambrian plates, I am still, as far as the federal government and of all our programs are concerned, in northern Ontario." He added, "I don't agree with that decision and I am certainly prepared to do whatever I can to help in that [regard]." Of course, the Prime Minister was referring to the McGuinty government's politically motivated decision to remove Muskoka from the north.

I would like to point out that in the district of Muskoka, the average family and individual incomes are third lowest of all the ridings in northern Ontario and \$10,000 below the provincial average.

We don't have any large mining and forestry operations in Muskoka. In fact, we've had two major manufacturers close their doors in the last three and a half years. Yet the Minister of Finance insists that Muskoka is part of the vibrant economy of southern Ontario.

Well, this is what one of my constituents wrote to me: "As a professional woman with 20 years' experience in Toronto and income to match, I figured I could make a go of it and realize my dream of moving home to Muskoka to be near my family. I was warned, but I refused to believe that it was still as badly depressed as it was when I was growing up. Things had to have changed since I left in 1979. I was so wrong."

Premier, on behalf of all the people who work and live in Muskoka, on behalf of the more than 8,000 people who have signed my petition, I ask you to reconsider this politically motivated decision.

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Mr Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): It's with extreme pride and honour that I announce in the House today that in my riding of Northumberland four students have been awarded the 2004 Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation Excellence Awards. This year's recipients are Chris Berrigan of St Mary's High School in Cobourg, Elaine Cortesis of CDCI West in Cobourg, Kristin Elizabeth Anderson of Trinity College School, and Alexander Sculthorpe of Port Hope High School. One of these students, Chris Berrigan, is also my youth liaison person to assist me in my riding with youth issues.

These scholarships are awarded based on community involvement, demonstrated leadership abilities, innovative thinking and academic achievement. This is an exceptional achievement. I know I speak on behalf of all members of this House when I say it's with great honour that I convey congratulations to these four outstanding graduates. Each should be extremely proud of their accomplishments.

On Monday, June 28, the recipients will be honoured at an official reception hosted by the Honourable James K. Bartleman, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario. These students are fine examples of our next generation. They provide hope. That is why our government is committed to providing students with the foundation and tools necessary to succeed in life. That is why we are reducing class sizes in JK to grade 3. That is why we launched

pilot projects to assist students with literacy and numeracy. We said we'd do it, and we've done it.

ST AGATHA SEPARATE SCHOOL

Mr Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): On Friday, June 11, I had the opportunity to visit St Agatha Catholic school in my riding of Scarborough Southwest. St Agatha school was built in 1965. It is the seat of the French immersion program for south Scarborough. It also boasts of many academic, athletic and artistic achievements. St Agatha has great staff, great students and a great parent committee.

However, cuts to school boards by the previous government have left the school crumbling. It is overcrowded. It houses 460 students where half are schooled in portables that are in a poor state on their own. Many students travel between the portables and the main building to use the bathroom or the library, often unsupervised, which places children in an unsafe and unsecure environment. Speaking of bathrooms, there are only two to serve the entire population. The water quality in the school is poor and taps are left open for 30 minutes every morning just to get clear water. There is little ventilation, as many windows do not work properly, nor is there air conditioning.

I was shocked to see the state St Agatha is in. However, I can say that I am pleased the Dalton McGuinty government is committed to assisting school boards across the province to finance school renewal. Schools in a poor state, such as St Agatha, will be able to access a \$200-million amortization fund in order to repair the roof, improve their water taps, upgrade computer networks, fix windows and walls, and build more washrooms. These improvements will undoubtedly help our children to learn in a safe and secure environment and will lead to better student achievement.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): I'm honoured to stand in the House today to speak about the achievements of this government in just eight short months. At the end of this session, I can say with confidence that we are only beginning to implement the agenda of real, positive change.

Our first budget will shorten wait lists and deliver improved health care for all Ontarians: shorter wait times in the area of cancer care, hip and knee replacement and cataract surgery, as well as new MRIs and CT scanners. The McGuinty government is providing enhanced funding for long-term-care facilities to the tune of \$406 million just in 2004-05.

We're investing an additional \$2.6 billion in public education over our government's mandate. We're increasing the number of turnaround teams for struggling schools from 42 to 100. We have frozen tuitions and now we've committed to compensating post-secondary institutions during that freeze. We are delivering enhanced

funding for OSAP to improve access to student loans for more than 50,000 students. We've eliminated the private school tax credit. We called on school boards to place a moratorium on school closures.

We're taking steps to ensure that our children receive a first-rate education while our parents can receive quick and accessible health care services when and why they need it. We're delivering real improvements for our children, our families and our friends, and I applaud this government's commitment to a better quality of life for the people of Ontario.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

GAS PRICE WATCHDOG ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004

SUR L'AGENT DE SURVEILLANCE DES PRIX DU CARBURANT

Mr Gravelle moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 115, An Act respecting the price of motor vehicle fuel and the appointment of a Gas Price Watchdog / Projet de loi 115, Loi concernant le prix du carburant pour véhicules automobiles et la nomination d'un agent de surveillance des prix du carburant.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): The purpose of this bill is to ensure that retailers, wholesalers and manufacturers of motor vehicle fuel are accountable to the public with respect to the pricing of fuel. This legislation will have a positive impact all across the province, but it is particularly needed in northern Ontario. This morning in Toronto, gas could be bought for 72.5 cents a litre, while in Thunder Bay it was almost 89 cents a litre and in Marathon it was 95 cents a litre—a massive price discrepancy that cannot be justified.

My bill would establish the Office of the Gas Price Watchdog, which would monitor, investigate and report to the Minister of Energy on pricing practices in the province with respect to motor vehicle fuel and could conduct inquiries into pricing practices on the order of the minister.

Clearly, this is legislation that is needed, and I hope it continues to receive the support of the House and our government as it proceeds through the legislative process.

DENTAL HYGIENE AMENDMENT ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004

MODIFIANT LA LOI DE 1991 SUR LES HYGIÉNISTES DENTAIRE

Mr Flaherty moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 116, An Act to amend the Dental Hygiene Act, 1991 / Projet de loi 116, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1991 sur les hygiénistes dentaires.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Jim Flaherty (Whitby-Ajax): I've introduced this bill to remove the restriction that currently prohibits dental hygienists from cleaning a patient's teeth without first having to obtain a dentist's order. This will allow more people in Ontario to obtain affordable and accessible oral hygiene care. It is particularly important for residents in long-term-care facilities, non-ambulatory residents of rural and remote areas and individuals without private dental insurance.

The recommendation of the Health Professions Regulatory Advisory Council, which is the government's own advisory body, was that this restriction be removed. This was supported by none other than Dalton McGuinty in a letter he wrote to the dental hygienists on September 29, 2003. For that reason, I'm sure all the members opposite will support my bill.

1350

LOI DE 2004

SUR LE STATUT BILINGUE DE LA VILLE D'OTTAWA

OTTAWA IS A BILINGUAL CITY ACT, 2004

M. Bisson propose la première lecture du projet de loi suivant:

Projet de loi 117, Loi prévoyant une politique sur les langues française et anglaise pour la ville d'Ottawa / Bill 117, An Act to provide for an English and French languages policy for the City of Ottawa.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

M. Gilles Bisson (Timmins-Baie James): Comme on le sait, aujourd'hui, c'est la Saint-Jean-Baptiste, la journée où les francophones à travers le Canada ont la chance de célébrer la francophonie de ce pays. Ce projet de loi est pour s'assurer que le gouvernement libéral garde les ententes et les promesses qu'ils ont faites dans l'élection le printemps dernier pour accepter que la ville d'Ottawa devienne une ville officiellement bilingue.

Avec ça, je demande le consentement unanime que le projet de loi soit passé, deuxième et troisième lectures, aujourd'hui, maintenant.

The Speaker: Mr Bisson has asked for second and third reading. Is it the—I heard a no.

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I seek unanimous consent to move the following motion without notice and to have the question be put on the motion without debate or amendment:

That the following committees be authorized to meet during the summer adjournment in accordance with the schedule of meeting dates agreed to by the three party

whips and tabled with the Clerk of the assembly to examine and inquire into the following matters:

Standing committee on estimates to consider the estimates of certain ministries;

Standing committee on finance and economic affairs to consider certain legislation referred to it;

Standing committee on general government to consider certain legislation referred to it;

The Chair of the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly, one committee member from each recognized party and the clerk to adjourn to Salt Lake City, Utah, to attend the annual meeting of the National Conference of State Legislatures;

Standing committee on public accounts for the purpose of report writing, and that the Chair, one committee member from each recognized party, the clerk and research officer be authorized to adjourn to Fredericton, New Brunswick, to attend the annual Canadian Council of Public Accounts Committees conference;

Standing committee on social policy to consider certain legislation referred to it; and

That the committees be authorized to release reports by depositing a copy of any report with the Clerk of the assembly during the summer adjournment, and that upon resumption of the meetings of the House, the Chairs of such committees shall bring any such reports before the House in accordance with the standing orders.

The Speaker: The government House leader has asked for unanimous consent. Do we have unanimous consent? No.

Motions?

Hon Mr Duncan: Mr Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to move the following motion without notice and to have the question be put on the motion without debate or amendment:

That a select committee on the five-year review committee final report reviewing the Securities Act (Ontario) be appointed to fulfill the review; consultation and reporting obligations set out in section 143.12(5) of the Securities Act, and specifically the priority recommendations, as set out in the five-year review committee final report reviewing the Securities Act (Ontario), including securities regulation in Canada and a single regulator system and the appropriate structure for the adjudicative tribunal role of the Ontario Securities Commission;

That the committee Chair be a member of the government party and that the Vice-Chair be a member of the third party, and that the three party whips table the names of the committee members, identifying the Chair and Vice-Chair, with the Clerk of the Assembly on or before Tuesday, July 6, 2004, as follows: six to be named by the chief government whip, two to be named by the whip of the official opposition, and one to be named by the whip of the third party;

That the committee have the authority to meet concurrently with the House and during any adjournment of the House;

That, at its discretion, the committee may have the authority to issue interim reports; and

That the committee submit its final report to the assembly on or before Monday, October 18, 2004, and, if the House is not sitting, the committee have the authority to release its report by depositing a copy of it with the Clerk of the assembly and, upon resumption of the sittings of the House, the Chair of the committee shall present the report to the House in accordance with the standing orders.

The Speaker: The government House leader seeks unanimous consent. Do I have unanimous consent? I heard a no.

Hon Mr Duncan: I seek unanimous consent to move the following motion without notice and to have the question be put on the motion without debate or amendment:

That a select committee on emergency powers and disaster management be appointed to review and report on the adequacy of Ontario's emergency management statutes;

That the committee Chair be a member of the government party and the Vice-Chair be a member of the official opposition and that the three party whips table the names of the committee members identifying the Chair and the Vice-Chair with the Clerk of the House on or before Tuesday July 6, 2004, as follows: six to be named by the whip of the government, two to be named by the whip of the official opposition and one to be named by the whip of the third party;

That the committee have the authority to meet concurrently with the House and during any adjournment of the House;

That the committee be authorized to adopt the text of a draft bill on the subject matter of its terms of reference and, where the text of the draft bill is adopted by the committee, it shall be an instruction to the Chair to introduce such bill in his or her name as the primary sponsor; the other committee members who support the bill may have their names printed on the face of the bill as secondary sponsors;

That the committee be authorized to adjourn from place to place in North America;

That the committee submit its final report and introduce its legislation on or before Monday, November 1, 2004, and, if the assembly is not sitting, the committee have the authority to release its report and draft legislation by depositing copies with the Clerk of the assembly and, upon resumption of the sittings of the House, the Chair of the committee shall present the report and introduce its legislation to the assembly in accordance with the standing orders.

The Speaker: The government House leader has requested unanimous consent for the motion as stated. Do we have—we have no unanimous consent.

Hon Christopher Bentley (Minister of Labour): I seek unanimous consent to call the order for third reading of Bill 56, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 in respect of family medical leave and other

matters, and to have the question put immediately without debate or amendment.

The Speaker: The Minister of Labour seeks unanimous consent for the motion. Do we have unanimous consent? We don't have unanimous consent.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

ALTERNATIVE ENERGY SOURCES

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): One of the greatest challenges we face as a province is the looming gap between electricity supply and demand. Unfortunately, previous governments failed to plan ahead. As a result, we have been left with an enormous challenge to ensure there is enough electricity to keep the lights on in our province. The McGuinty government is facing up to this situation. We are moving swiftly and responsibly to tackle these challenges instead of running away from them or hiding them or passing them on to our children and grandchildren, and we're doing so in a way that will minimize the environmental footprint we leave to future generations.

A grade 5 class from Owen Public School in North York recently sent me over 60 letters, arguing that we need to replace fossil fuels such as coal with cleaner forms of generation. I've brought these letters with me and I'd like to take a moment to share what some of these young students had to say.

One student writes, "Ontario should think about using alternatives to fossil fuels due to their bad effect on our environment and our health ... it will cost money to develop the technologies but it will be worth doing it in the long run. Think about our Earth, because it's the only one we have...."

Another student added, "We need to make better choices on our energy sources so that Ontario will be a greener and healthier place to live...."

1400

Another student writes, "In my opinion, we cannot depend on fossil fuels for much longer ... they cause pollution which damages the environment and contributes to health problems for humans and animals.... Let's change it before it's too late."

Another student writes, "We should use renewable energy sources so we won't have as much pollution. So please, start using renewable energy sources whenever you can!"

Like these thoughtful young students, the McGuinty government understands that there's no more time to waste. We understand that finding clean, affordable and sustainable sources of electricity must be a top priority for this government. Currently electricity from non-hydro renewable sources makes up less than 1% of our overall

supply mix, even though there is enormous untapped potential in this province.

That's why on April 28 of this year we initiated a call for proposals for 300 megawatts of new renewable energy capacity, opening the door to a significant increase in the amount of clean power sources in Ontario, such as wind, solar, water, biomass and landfill gas.

The response to this call has been no less than astounding: 90 proponents have expressed interest in responding to the call for proposals we put forward. We have received expressions of interest equal to 4,400 megawatts of potential renewable energy supply; 4,400 megawatts of clean, green electricity. That's almost 15 times what we asked for this time around.

This strong interest shows that by encouraging renewable interest, we are attracting new participants to the electricity supply business who are innovative, environmentally conscious and can improve the quality of our air with greener sources of power.

This is not only good for the environment, but it's also good for the economy. By tapping into this wellspring of interest in creating renewable electricity, we are also tapping into a fertile source for job creation and economic growth. This will be the first of many opportunities for renewable electricity providers to come to the table and help us meet our needs.

Given this interest, in the future we will be presented with proposals that will not only help us keep the lights on, but help clean up our air and create new jobs and new opportunities for the people in this great province. The range of proposals we expect to receive will allow us to choose the most viable, cost-effective projects for Ontario's consumers.

There is no doubt that the interest we've received will ensure we exceed our targets of generating 5% of Ontario's total energy capacity from renewable sources by 2007 and 10% by 2010. Achieving these goals would make Ontario a clear leader in the world in encouraging alternative power and greener forms of energy.

There will be even more good news tomorrow when we initiate a separate call for proposals for 2,500 megawatts of new capacity or demand-side management. This represents one third of our government's commitment to replace coal-fired generation. We're moving, and we're going to achieve that target. This will mean jobs and help boost our economy.

Not only are we looking for proposals to build new generation capacity; we're also looking for proposals that will conserve electricity, and, for the first time in this province's history, we will treat them on an equal footing.

These calls for proposals will be conducted in a way that is open and transparent. Prospective bidders and other interested parties can find details on both of our calls for proposals by visiting a dedicated Web site at—I know Mr Bradley will want to write this down—www.ontarioelectricityrfp.ca.

Through these initiatives we're bringing about real, positive change that will mean a better quality of life for

Ontarians. We're cleaning up our air and creating a healthier Ontario. We're properly recognizing the importance and potential for renewable energy and conservation, and we're acting decisively to protect the best interests of the people of this province for today and for future generations to come.

LANGUE ET CULTURE FRANÇAISES FRENCH LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur (ministre de la Culture, ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones): Je m'en voudrais de commencer ma déclaration aujourd'hui sans rendre hommage aux Franco-Ontariens, aux Acadiens, aux Québécois, aux Fransaskois et à tous les grands peuples de la famille canadienne-française en cette fête de la Saint-Jean-Baptiste.

En 2004, nous allons fêter toute l'année partout au Canada parce que nous célébrons fièrement 400 ans de présence française en Amérique du Nord. Je pense que l'annonce de la création de mon comité consultatif provincial sur les Affaires francophones est une excellente façon de souligner le 24 juin. Pendant notre campagne électorale, nous avons promis de créer le comité consultatif provincial sur les Affaires francophones. Aujourd'hui, nous tenons notre promesse.

Notre gouvernement veut entendre l'opinion de la communauté francophone sur les principaux sujets touchant la culture et la langue françaises. Les francophones font partie intégrante de notre province et il faut les écouter.

Le nouveau comité conseillera la ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones sur l'élaboration des stratégies, l'établissement des priorités et la création des programmes qui touchent la communauté francophone ainsi que sur la planification et la prestation des services en français au sein de notre gouvernement. Il nous aidera également à maintenir un dialogue constant avec notre communauté francophone.

De toute évidence, en écoutant les Franco-Ontariens et les Franco-Ontariennes et en s'assurant qu'ils ont leur mot à dire sur les politiques qui les concernent, nous serons mieux en mesure d'offrir les services qui satisferont à leurs besoins et à nos priorités.

Le comité est composé de 12 personnes qui ont démontré leur engagement à l'égard de la préservation et de la promotion de la langue et de la culture françaises en Ontario. Il est composé d'hommes et de femmes de toutes les régions de la province. Il sera présidé par Donald Obonsawin, un ancien sous-ministre, qui a près de 25 ans d'expérience autant dans le domaine fédéral que provincial.

Très rapidement, je nomme les autres membres du comité: Denise Culligan, Diane Dubois, Rolande Faucher, Colombe Hinse, Norman Labrie, Guy Matte, Jacques Michaud, Florence Ngenzebuhoro, Jacqueline Pelletier, Wesley Romulus et Ryan Paquette. M. Paquette est avec nous aujourd'hui et j'aimerais que l'assemblée lui souhaite la bienvenue.

Monsieur le Président, la présence des Franco-Ontariens et des Franco-Ontariennes en Ontario remonte à plus de 400 ans. Ils ont beaucoup contribué à la vie politique, sociale, culturelle et économique de la province.

J'aimerais aussi remercier toute l'équipe de l'Office des affaires francophones, qui sont ici, et qui par leur dévouement ont travaillé très fort à la préparation du comité. Plus particulièrement je voudrais saluer Serge Bastien, Suzanne Lessard, Daniéla Goldsmith et Gabriel Manseau.

La communauté francophone doit maintenant relever un important défi: survivre à l'assimilation. Notre gouvernement a l'obligation d'aider sa communauté francophone à cet égard.

Il y a près de 20 ans, en 1986, un autre gouvernement libéral a énoncé clairement son intention d'aider la communauté francophone en adoptant la Loi sur les services en français. Dans le préambule de la Loi, le gouvernement reconnaît que le français est une langue historique et honorable. Il souligne l'apport du patrimoine culturel de la population francophone et il désire le sauvegarder pour les générations à venir. La Loi énonce clairement l'intention du gouvernement de préserver la langue et la culture françaises.

Oui, monsieur le Président, notre gouvernement préservera la contribution de la population francophone ainsi que son héritage culturel. Grâce aux conseils de ce nouveau comité, nous pourrions offrir de meilleures perspectives d'avenir pour tous les Ontariens et Ontariennes.

C'est une belle journée ensoleillée, et c'est ainsi que je vois l'avenir pour les Franco-Ontariens et pour toute la province de l'Ontario. Merci.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Responses?

1410

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It's a pleasure to respond to both the ministers' statements today. Very briefly, and respectfully, I would respond to Madame Meilleur, on the extension of French language consultations in the province of Ontario—more importantly on St Jean Baptiste Day, which happens to be my wedding anniversary as well, so it's always close to my heart.

I'm somewhat uncertain here. Forming another commission is a laudable announcement but really of not much substance. I'm somewhat disappointed because, as I read the comments you've recently made seeking the support of cabinet, it doesn't seem, despite your keen enthusiasm, which I commend you for, to support the French language, you don't have support around the cabinet table. You've committed, as you might know, to having a French language ombudsman in the province. If I, as part of the estimates committee, look at their budget, it has been flatlined; in fact, it's marginally reduced. I think you have some time here; what the committee does is give you some time.

One of the other concerns is that you've stated publicly, as I read my notes here, that you want, for ex-

ample, to talk to your colleagues about the francophone immigrant service to children, training for francophones and nominations of francophones for agencies, boards and commissions. The problem is, you're going, as I understand, to ask for all administrative tribunal public decisions to be monitored in both official languages. I'd like to know, and I'm requesting you to tell us, the projected cost of that, when at the same time you're delisting or privatizing health care.

There are some questions here, on St Jean Baptiste Day. I don't think you're done. You must keep a tight handle on that file, for sure.

ALTERNATIVE ENERGY SOURCES

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I want to respond to the Minister of Energy. As the critic in that file, I'm again disappointed. You used the term "astounding response" to the RFP for renewables. I'd say what's astonishing here is that you haven't created one kilowatt of energy.

I'm reading an article here from the New York Times, dated June 17: "With Ontario on the brink of an energy ... squeeze" and supply crisis, with an uncertain future—so the whole market is waiting for you to make one firm commitment to create more new energy sources in Ontario. I think it's commendable.

If you want a reference point, look at the alternative fuels committee, which was chaired by Dr Doug Galt—he's now a candidate in Northumberland in the federal election—and Steve Gilchrist. Dr Marie Bountrogianni was on that committee as well. We had a unanimous consent report, which you would know halves most of the targets you've enunciated today by increasing the amount of renewables in the base load and the overall capacity of the system. But to date you haven't announced anything but more bureaucracy and more price.

I often read foreign papers to get a better handle on the energy file. There's more in the New York Times and the Salt Lake City news than there is in the province of Ontario. You aren't talking very clearly about alternatives for the replacement of coal. You know you're removing 7,500 megawatts of energy from our generation capacity. You haven't replaced one of those, and all the experts say your date of 2007 is too short a timeline.

I'm reading a report here, dated June 17, that was just issued—I'm sure you have a copy of it; it's from the Power Workers' Union of Ontario and raises several questions. I'm going to read one reference to Dr Ross McKittrick, an associate professor of economics at the University of Guelph. He's talking about coal-powered plants. "Based on a careful review of the scientific evidence, he concluded that power plants play a small role in Ontario air quality and have little impact on severe air quality episodes."

Minister, you've contradicted your Premier. The Premier said on TVO a couple of weeks ago that he wasn't committed to the elimination of coal. The other

day when I asked you the question, you said you're committed, and yet you wouldn't resign.

You have no plan. The only plan I've heard is that you're going to raise the price of electricity. The only short-term supply solution you've really got is natural gas. You know that the price of natural gas has gone up by as much as 300%.

What you're not doing here is telling the people the truth. The truth is that you're going to pass billions of dollars on to the hard-working people of Ontario. Stand up and do your job. Tell us what new sources—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Could I request that you keep your personal discussions a bit quieter so I can hear.

LANGUE ET CULTURE FRANÇAISES

M. Gilles Bisson (Timmins-Baie James): La ministre, M^{me} Meilleur, a annoncé aujourd'hui un comité aviseur, et on peut dire que ce n'est pas une méchante affaire. C'est toujours bien de consulter la population ontarienne pour savoir, sur les dossiers, ce qui est important pour la communauté.

Mais, madame la Ministre, je veux vous rappeler que pendant l'élection au mois d'octobre, vous avez fait des promesses très claires. Vous avez dit que c'était pour donner une autonomie à la TFO. Il est neuf mois plus tard, neuf mois depuis que votre gouvernement a été élu, puis la première annonce qu'on a du ministère c'est qu'on va créer un comité aviseur pour consulter—quoi? Que vous avez des promesses que vous avez oubliées?

Vous avez fait, par exemple, une promesse à la communauté francophone, madame Meilleur, que je supporte et que je pense fait beaucoup de bon sens. Ça, c'est dire à la ville d'Ottawa que oui, ils ont le droit d'être officiellement bilingues par un statut provincial. Ça prend un néo-démocrate qui rentre dans la Chambre pour vous le rappeler aujourd'hui? Madame, c'est dans votre plateforme électorale. On s'attend à ce que vous gardiez ces promesses.

Vous avez dit que vous étiez pour mettre à l'intérieur des ministères un ombudsman pour s'assurer que les francophones, quand ils ne sont pas desservis, peuvent aller quelque part. Madame la Ministre, c'est neuf mois. Les promesses ne sont pas là. Vous donnez un comité aviseur. On dit que c'est beau, le comité. Bravo. Mais on attend les promesses que vous avez faites. À ce point-ci, madame, vous ne les avez pas gardées.

ALTERNATIVE ENERGY SOURCES

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): It is with pleasure that I respond to the non-announcement of the Minister of Energy today, because here is the reality: After the Premier said that a Liberal government would close all coal-fired plants by 2007, here we are now nine months later, and do we have even a plan? No. The Minister of Energy hasn't even been able to present a

plan. All he has come with today is an announcement that they are now going to call for proposals for 300 megawatts of renewable energy. So he's going to call for proposals. That will be another six-month, nine-month, 12-month process, and still no plan. Then, in the fine print, he says that the government will call for 2,000 megawatts of new electricity capacity, but that's not a plan either.

So here is the reality of what is happening: The government doesn't have a plan. The government doesn't have any construction. The government doesn't even have anything real to announce here today. Nine months into the government's mandate, and this is what we have: We have a government that fiddles while coal burns. This is what we have: a government that fiddles while coal burns.

What's interesting is that if you compare Ontario with other jurisdictions, Manitoba, for example, is actually bringing wind turbines on stream. Manitoba is actually in the environmental hearing stage for bringing new production on stream. Has this government done any of those things? Not even close. No plan, no concrete proposals, no financing, no engineering, no environmental approvals. Nothing is happening. Shocking. Surprising.

We know from the other announcements made by the Minister of Energy that the 300 megawatts he's talking about here, the call for proposals for renewables and the 2,500 for new production, if it ever does come on stream, is going to be very expensive electricity indeed. I read the announcement, and I was looking for the part that said how much this is going to cost the consumer. I think we know how much it's going to cost.

This minister, six months ago, boasted that the price of electricity was going to be set by the Ontario Energy Board. Now, when we read his legislation as proposed the other day, he wants to continue to have the same kind of electricity prices set in the backroom that the Conservatives had. What does it say to me? It says that the cost for consumers is going to be very, very high, and the government doesn't want to admit it.

DEFERRED VOTES

GREENBELT PROTECTION ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 SUR LA PROTECTION DE LA CEINTURE DE VERDURE

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 27, An Act to establish a greenbelt study area and to amend the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act, 2001 / Projet de loi 27, Loi établissant une zone d'étude de la ceinture de verdure et modifiant la Loi de 2001 sur la conservation de la moraine d'Oak Ridges.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1420 to 1425.

The Speaker: All those in favour, please rise one at a time and recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Duguid, Brad	Patten, Richard
Bartolucci, Rick	Duncan, Dwight	Peters, Steve
Bentley, Christopher	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Phillips, Gerry
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Gerretsen, John	Prue, Michael
Bisson, Gilles	Gravelle, Michael	Pupatello, Sandra
Bountrogianni, Marie	Horwath, Andrea	Ramal, Khalil
Bradley, James J.	Hoy, Pat	Ramsay, David
Brotten, Laurel C.	Kennedy, Gerard	Rinaldi, Lou
Brown, Michael A.	Kular, Kuldeep	Sandals, Liz
Brownell, Jim	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Sergio, Mario
Bryant, Michael	Leal, Jeff	Smitherman, George
Cansfield, Donna H.	Levac, Dave	Sorbara, Greg
Caplan, David	Marchese, Rosario	Takhar, Harinder S.
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Marsales, Judy	Van Bommel, Maria
Churley, Marilyn	McMeekin, Ted	Watson, Jim
Colle, Mike	McNeely, Phil	Wilkinson, John
Cordiano, Joseph	Meilleur, Madeleine	Wong, Tony C.
Crozier, Bruce	Millroy, John	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Delaney, Bob	Mitchell, Carol	Zimmer, David
Di Cocco, Caroline	Mossop, Jennifer F.	
Dombrowsky, Leona	Parsons, Ernie	

The Speaker: All those against, please rise and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Klees, Frank	Runciman, Robert W.
Barrett, Toby	Miller, Norm	Scott, Laurie
Chudleigh, Ted	Murdoch, Bill	Wilson, Jim
Flaherty, Jim	O'Toole, John	Witmer, Elizabeth
Hardeman, Ernie	Ouellette, Jerry J.	Yakabuski, John

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 61; the nays are 15.

The Speaker: The motion is carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

SANDY'S LAW (LIQUOR LICENCE AMENDMENT), 2004

LOI SANDY DE 2004 (MODIFICATION DE LA LOI SUR LES PERMIS D'ALCOOL)

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 43, An Act to amend the Liquor Licence Act by requiring signage cautioning pregnant women that the consumption of alcohol while pregnant is the cause of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder / Projet de loi 43, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les permis d'alcool en exigeant que soient placées des affiches avertissant les femmes enceintes que la consommation d'alcool pendant la grossesse occasionne l'ensemble des troubles causés par l'alcoolisation fœtale.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1429 to 1434.

The Speaker: All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Amott, Ted	Duncan, Dwight	Patten, Richard
Arthurs, Wayne	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Peters, Steve
Barrett, Toby	Gerretsen, John	Phillips, Gerry
Bartolucci, Rick	Gravelle, Michael	Prue, Michael
Bentley, Christopher	Horwath, Andrea	Pupatello, Sandra
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hoy, Pat	Qaadri, Shafiq
Bisson, Gilles	Jackson, Cameron	Ramal, Khalil
Bountrogianni, Marie	Kennedy, Gerard	Ramsay, David
Bradley, James J.	Klees, Frank	Rinaldi, Lou
Broten, Laurel C.	Kormos, Peter	Runciman, Robert W.
Brown, Michael A.	Kular, Kuldip	Sandals, Liz
Brownell, Jim	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Scott, Laurie
Bryant, Michael	Leal, Jeff	Sergio, Mario
Cansfield, Donna H.	Levac, Dave	Smitherman, George
Caplan, David	Marchese, Rosario	Sorbara, Greg
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Marsales, Judy	Sterling, Norman W.
Chudleigh, Ted	McMeekin, Ted	Takhar, Harinder S.
Churley, Marilyn	McNeely, Phil	Van Bommel, Maria
Colle, Mike	Meilleur, Madeleine	Watson, Jim
Cordiano, Joseph	Millroy, John	Wilkinson, John
Craitor, Kim	Mitchell, Carol	Wilson, Jim
Crozier, Bruce	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Witmer, Elizabeth
Delaney, Bob	Murdoch, Bill	Wong, Tony C.
Di Cocco, Caroline	O'Toole, John	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Dombrowsky, Leona	Ouellette, Jerry J.	Yakubski, John
Duguid, Brad	Parsons, Ernie	Zimmer, David

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 78; the nays are zero.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): On a point of order, with your indulgence, Mr Speaker: This is a marvellous place when everyone comes together; it really is. We don't do it enough, but you did it today.

On behalf of myself, my wife Linda, our oldest son Shane, other children who came here before and didn't enjoy it all that much, and our home-and-play day for their last day of school, and our son Sandy, I thank you. I especially thank you for the individuals not yet born, who will have a different life because of the collective actions of all of us.

I've said before that I'm very proud of you, and our province should be very proud of you. We made a difference today that we may not be able to measure, but I know it will happen, and we can go home tonight saying, "Together we can do anything." Thank you so much for your support.

1440

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): This is the last day for this group of pages. I'm happy to say that the pages are disappointed that no one was being named in their time here. They are very disappointed. I know all members will want to join me in thanking them for their assistance over the past several weeks. So let us all recognize them in the usual, wonderful way.

VISITORS

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): Mr Speaker, on a point of order: I have to say that we not

only have these pages who are leaving us today, but we have a former page, Alex Steele, from Sault Ste Marie, who is here with his family, visiting his sister, who is currently a page. We'd like to welcome him back and wish you a safe trip back home.

Mr Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): Mr Speaker, on a point of order: If I may, my first page as the member for Mississauga West, Jamie Franks, is leaving us today. I'd like to recognize the presence of her parents, Danette and Brian; her brother, Alexander; and her grandmother, Clarissa Wong.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): I hope all the pages' parents are not here today, because we're going to have a lot of points of order.

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton): My former page's parents are not here. However, the mayor of Halton Hills, Rick Bonnette, and his wife, Josey, are here, and I'd like to recognize them.

Mr David Zimmer (Willowdale): Mr Speaker, on a point of order: We have another former page visiting today to see the windup of the events, Mr Sameer Rabbani.

ORAL QUESTIONS**HEALTH PREMIUMS**

Mr Jim Flaherty (Whitby-Ajax): To a less pleasant subject of taxes in Ontario, to the Acting Premier: Your government, when it was seeking office, promised not to raise taxes, and then did, with this Ontario health tax. Indeed, the legislation itself imposes a new tax called the Ontario health premium. There's no question it's a tax. My question to the Acting Premier today is about the equal application of this new tax to working families in Ontario. I would ask for assurance by the Acting Premier to all the people of Ontario, on behalf of his government, that all working people in Ontario will be called upon to pay their applicable share of your new tax.

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): The Minister of Finance.

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): One of the very attractive elements of the Ontario health premium is that it's geared to income. So the reality is—I thought my friend would have known this because he has been here most days for question period—that some 48% of Ontario tax filers will not have to pay the premium. In fact, 37% of all Ontario families will not have to pay the premium. But the premium is geared to income so that those with the most modest incomes, in fact those with incomes under \$20,000, pay nothing at all, and those with the highest incomes pay the largest part of the premium.

We're proud of the fact that we've been able to raise this revenue to enhance our health care system but make the premium that helps us pay for that system geared to the income of the people of Ontario.

Mr Flaherty: As the legislation says, this is a new tax. This new tax was referred to by the Premier the other day in the Legislature, saying it's "different from previous premiums introduced by previous governments of Ontario because they are tied to income, meaning they're going to be collected under the Income Tax Act and deducted from paycheques accordingly."

Here is the concern, Minister: CUPE, the Toronto District School Board and others have indicated that as part of their collective agreements they will be insisting that clauses that were there before, or clauses that they will insist be inserted, will provide that this tax will be paid not by their members but by their employers in the public sector and the broader public sector, which in turn will mean that the members of those groups, those employees, compared to other employees in Ontario, will not be obliged to pay your new health tax.

I say to you that that is an inequitable attribution of that responsibility to taxpayers in Ontario. I hope you'll assure the people of Ontario that you'll not permit it to happen in the public sector or the broader public sector.

Hon Mr Sorbara: I really much appreciate this line of questioning from my friend from Whitby-Ajax, because it gives me an opportunity to say once again in this Legislature that this is not a premium as contemplated by those collective agreements. The critical difference, sir, is this: Failure to pay the premium is a violation of the Income Tax Act, and the penalties arise accordingly. But it does not disqualify any individual in this province from the health care services that we provide through the Ministry of Health and other agencies. So to that extent, it doesn't have that classic definition of a premium and is not covered by those collective agreements.

I'll say one final point, sir, that if workers and employers choose to bargain on this issue, they are perfectly free to do that. But this premium is not covered by those old provisions.

Mr Flaherty: So if you say that, then you're going to instruct every one of your ministers—including the Chair of Management Board and the Minister of Education—in the collective bargaining that is going to go on this summer when this Legislature is not in session, that they will not agree that any of this health tax that you're imposing will be paid by employers; that is, in the public sector or the broader public sector, be it school boards or hospitals or CUPE—whatever.

You will assure us that that will not happen, so that when we come back to this place, the people of Ontario, through those elected here, will be able to come to this place and say that everyone is paying their fair share of your new health tax, that no one is getting preferential treatment, that you instructed them in the negotiations that this is a health tax and is to be paid by everyone and will not be on the table for negotiation. Assure the people of Ontario of that.

Hon Mr Sorbara: My friend the Attorney General says, "He's just making it up as he goes along." I think that's a fair comment.

I think I've answered the question, sir. I think I've made it perfectly clear that this premium does not come within the four corners of those pre-existing collective agreements.

But I want to tell my friend one other thing: our ability with this revenue under the premium will give us the capacity to start to transform the health care system; to start to invest in home care again; to start to invest in long-term care again; to start to reduce waiting lists; to start to make those transformations of primary care that the Minister of Health has so eloquently spoken about. That's the real essence of the premium, and that's why it was a central part of our budget. We're very proud that we're going to be able to get on with that transformation.

CAPITAL FUNDING

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): My question is to the Acting Premier. Yesterday, I stood in the House and asked your Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal why the Woodstock General Hospital was still waiting for approval to go to tender on their new hospital, after \$12 million had already been spent on the project and everything is ready to go.

Now I'd like to ask you why the Tillsonburg District Memorial Hospital has been waiting for capital approval to make renovations to the facilities for over a year. The hospital has approval from the Ministry of Health to build a satellite dialysis unit in its facility. The community has raised all the money needed to provide the equipment—well over \$700,000. Yet the hospital can't make the renovations to the rooms because they haven't heard from the government.

These projects have all met the necessary requirements and still don't have the final approval. I hope this is not your government discriminating against my constituents because of my political affiliation.

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): The Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal.

Hon David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): I understand why the member would want to frame his question in those terms, but I can assure him that's not the case.

Previous to our government assuming office, his government took on Michael Decter to do a health care capital review for both the health ministry and, at the time, the SuperBuild secretariat. The problem was that his government, unfortunately, had authorized so many of these projects without any dollars attached that there was no way they could ever be attended to.

Of course, as Mr Decter has advised—and we have released the report publicly; it is available to this member, as it is to any member of Ontario's public—there is a need to review the health care capital funding model because, unfortunately, of the infrastructure deficit that his government and, I would say quite honestly, the previous government have left. We are working at

cleaning up the mess that you've left us, and we will be getting to it as quickly as we as we possibly can.

1450

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Supplementary?

Mr John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke):

My question is also for the Acting Premier. Yesterday I asked the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal questions about the Pembroke Jail and the ongoing unanswered questions surrounding it, and also the seeming situation regarding a possible stop-work order with the courthouse renovations in Pembroke. Has there in fact been a stop-work order issued? If so, when will it be lifted, and are you penalizing Conservative-held ridings like Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke in Ontario?

Hon Mr Caplan: I was glad to answer the question yesterday, and the answer today is no different. The previous government left a complete mess when it came to capital projects in this province. I know the member opposite has done some extensive research into the justice sector in Renfrew county and I appreciate getting his perspective on these issues. I know, and I am hoping, that members opposite will work with us so that we can get these capital projects moving along.

But this is not a small problem. The government of the day previously left us with an enormous deficit, more than we can possibly attend to in any one year. We are developing a 10-year capital plan that will begin to proceed to get some of those projects going, as the finance minister spoke about in our budget. We are introducing new and innovative financing tools like the Canada-Ontario municipal rural infrastructure fund. I will be happy to elaborate more in the second supplementary.

The Speaker: Final supplementary?

Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): We're sensing a bit of a pattern over here. I remind the ministers that you took an oath on October 23 to govern for all the people of Ontario, and it's pretty clear from an assessment of our ridings that you're not living up to that commitment.

You've delayed or cancelled projects in Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, in Oxford, and I'm told you're interrupting phase 2 of a correctional facility that would create over 200 jobs in Leeds-Grenville. And that's not all. I have it on good authority that you're stalling the redevelopment of Highway 26 from Stayner to Collingwood in my riding of Simcoe-Grey. The money for this project was set aside over four and a half years ago, so it can't be a fiscal issue. There have been a number of horrific fatalities and accidents. According to the MTO, there have been 420 accidents on this old strip of road since 1988, and in the last election your Liberal candidate, Mark Redmond, said he supported this highway.

I can only conclude, ministers, that the only reason these projects are being held up is that you're discriminating against Tory ridings, that you're not—

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon Mr Caplan: Nothing could be further from the truth. The member's question contains his own answer. If something happened four and a half years ago when he sat at the cabinet table, why didn't you ever do anything

about it? Obviously the information the member has presented is not correct. I must tell you that all the bluff and bluster I hear opposite is just a continuation of what we saw for eight years, where the government of the day claimed they were going to make all these investments, but never did, and unfortunately decided to pass these problems on to future generations.

I can assure you that through the Canada-Ontario municipal rural infrastructure fund, through OSIFA, the Ontario Strategic Infrastructure Financing Authority, and innovative infrastructure renewal bonds, we are putting the proper tools in place to be able to deal with the problems that, frankly, those members opposite refused to during the eight years they were in government. Thank God we have a government that is prepared to roll up its sleeves and get down to do the job that is necessary to rebuild this province.

HEALTH PREMIUMS

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Acting Premier. You're about to sneak away from Queen's Park one week before your regressive health tax starts eating into the paycheques of modest- and middle-income Ontario working families. You'll be hiding somewhere when those working families discover that another \$50 a month is being taken from their paycheques. It's pretty clear that your new health tax is a direct attack on the millions of working families and seniors who now are going to be paying \$300 a year more, \$600 a year more, \$1,200 a year more because of your regressive and unfair tax. So on the last day of the Legislature you still have time to do the right thing. Will you axe the tax?

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): Just several minutes ago, that member voted to prevent committees from sitting all summer. What kind of hypocrisy is that? They're preventing committees from sitting to hear bills, they're preventing select committees from dealing with important issues, and they're preventing the passage of legislation that would allow people who have dying relatives time off work, legislation that you and a few of your members said they would pass.

You should be ashamed. The only one shrinking from his responsibilities is you—you and your caucus. We want to meet this summer. We want committees. We want to pass legislation. We want select committees. I can tell you that this finance minister and this Premier are leading the way.

Unlike you, we did what we said we'd do: We cut the corporate tax. You voted against it. You voted not to cancel the private school tax credit. Why don't you agree to sit this summer and pass that bill, and understand that this government is doing what is right for—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Thank you.

Mr Hampton: The Acting Premier must be hallucinating. I don't remember a vote on any of these things that he's talking about. I do remember a government that said

it wouldn't impose health care premiums because they're regressive and unfair for working families, and then turned around and did it. I do remember Liberals who said they wouldn't cut health care services, but then turned around and cut services of chiropractors, physiotherapists and optometrists.

That's the second problem with your budget. While you tax working families more, you're actually going to cut health services. That's what is really unfair: Working families pay more, get fewer health services, and when they need to see a chiropractor or a physiotherapist, they're told, "Pay out of your own pocket"—two-tier health care.

You still have time. Will you axe the tax and reverse your health care cuts?

Hon Mr Duncan: The Minister of Finance.

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): I'll tell you what's regressive. What's regressive in this place is eight members of this Parliament who refuse to allow a vote in this Legislature to pass a simple piece of legislation that would allow for families with sick parents to take leave from their work without putting their jobs at risk. That's regressive. Eight members of this Legislature are leaving this place today and are not allowing that bill to pass. It's very difficult to focus on anything else while those eight members insist that we will not have legislation allowing for urgent family medical leave. That is absolutely shameful.

Mr Hampton: The Minister of Finance must be hallucinating. With all these Liberal members, you could come back and sit on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I ask the government House leader—order. I'm trying to hear the leader of the third party in his supplementary.

Mr Hampton: If you want to pass legislation, you could come back next week. You have a majority.

There's another problem with this budget. It takes \$2 billion a year out of the pockets of modest- and middle-income families. But when you look at the numbers in terms of what's going to be spent on health care services, the same amount isn't going to be spent. Some of this money is going to go for sewer pipe. Some of it will go for television ads. Some of it we don't know what it's going to go for, but it won't go for health care services. This is not a health care budget.

You still have time. Axe the tax. Stop your cutting of health care services.

Hon Mr Sorbara: I think it is absolutely shameful that those who are watching this question period now do not know that just a few short minutes ago in this Legislature, when the government House leader asked for unanimous consent to bring forward family medical leave legislation and the opportunity to continue this Parliament so that we could get this bill passed—he talks about family, but really all he's interested in is his narrow, partisan political interest and trying to score a few points.

So I reject categorically the kind of rhetoric that has come from the leader of that party in this question and his

behaviour, particularly today in this Legislature by not allowing family medical leave legislation to pass to protect working families and, in particular, working families that have sick members who need care.

1500

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): To the Acting Premier—and I guess the Minister of Finance has forgotten how to file a notice of motion saying you want the House to sit next week.

We had another demonstration on the lawns of the Legislature today. Hundreds of people demonstrated against the cutting of obstetrics and paediatric services at Georgetown hospital. With the cutting of these services, expectant mothers from Georgetown will have to drive 35 minutes to Brampton to give birth, while Acton mothers will have to drive over an hour. Yet we have the Liberal government taking \$2 billion a year more out of working families' pockets while you cut and shut down more health services.

Can you explain, Acting Premier, to the people of Georgetown and the people of Ontario, the logic in taking \$2 billion more and saying it's going into health care services, while you cut these services at hospitals like Georgetown? Where's the logic?

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): The Minister of Health.

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): On this issue, I want to be able to say right from the get-go that it's true that the William Osler hospital, which is a three-site hospital servicing the north part of Halton region, the Brampton community and also the northern part of Etobicoke, is a hospital that is struggling on the financial side. I want to send a message very clearly to the mayor of Halton Hills, who is here, who I had a chance to speak with earlier, to Bruce Hood, a political candidate in that area who called me earlier in the week, to the honourable member, and especially to the people from that community that, while a proposal that is taking shape at the board level might be an advance, it hasn't come to the point where the Ministry of Health has a chance to say yea or nay.

I'm pleased to offer to the people of Halton Hills today the commitment from this government on two fronts. First, the viability of that hospital in Halton Hills will not be put at risk by our government. When I say "viability," I mean that it will continue to be an important community-based acute care hospital. This government and this Minister of Health will not sign off on a plan to shut down, move or cancel obstetrics or programs at the Halton Hills hospital.

Interruption.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order. I'm going to ask the visitors in the gallery not to participate in this applause. I'm going to ask the members also not to encourage it. Supplementary?

Mr Hampton: This should be relatively easy for the Minister of Health. You see, I'm sure I've heard the Premier on the phone, I'm sure I've heard the Premier on the radio, I'm sure I've heard him in dozens of places saying that all the money from the new health care tax will go to health care services. So it should be very easy for you, given that you're going to get \$2 billion a year more out of this health care tax, to say categorically that these services will not be shut down and the money will be available for those services to be continued. I want the second part of the answer, that the Ministry of Health will make available the funding so that these services will not be shut down.

Hon Mr Smitherman: I'll say this one more time for the member: This Minister of Health and this government will not sign off on any plan that puts these important services at risk. In exchange, I offer and ask the honourable member opposite this question: Why don't you stand in your place and do the right thing, which you haven't done so far today, and that is provide the protection to the families of the province of Ontario that is contained in our family leave act? Why is it that you stand up in your place all the time and lecture everybody, but because you want a sweetheart deal with an additional allocation of mad money for Howard Hampton to play around with—as a little temper tantrum for not getting your sweetheart deal, why is it, sir, that you think it's an act of leadership in this province to block leave for families that want to be united in a time of crisis? Why is that?

The Speaker: Final supplementary.

Mr Hampton: As with all other legislation, you have a majority and can file a notice of motion saying you want to sit next week and pass the legislation, and I invite you to do so. If you're so full of yourself, I invite you to do so.

Interjections.

The Speaker: I'm going to ask the government side to come to order. I'm having difficulty hearing the leader of the third party in his final supplementary.

Leader of the third party, could you put your final supplementary?

Mr Hampton: On behalf of the people at Georgetown Hospital, you didn't answer the second part of the question. Given that you're now going to take \$2 billion a year out of the pockets of hard-working modest- and middle-income families, we want a commitment that the Ministry of Health is going to provide the money for continuation of these services, that you're not going to go back to the hospital and say, "If you want to continue these services, cut something else." Let's hear the commitment that the Ministry of Health is going to come up with the funding so these paediatric and obstetric services can continue at Georgetown hospital. Let's hear it.

Hon Mr Smitherman: This fake display of credibility from a man who was part of a government that cut training spots to produce new doctors in our province, who was part of a government that, for years running, froze the Ontario drug benefit for our seniors—he's

going to lecture us on the provision of services? I doubt it, and I especially doubt it on a day when he and his party stand against an initiative, a piece of legislation, that would allow for eight weeks of protected leave so that Ontarians can be united with their loved ones in a time of crisis.

He offers in exchange for his conduct, which is based simply on his desire to get more mad money and cash for his caucus—he's willing to put families and the support that can be offered in a time of crisis at risk, and then he stands in his place and tries to lecture us. I say to the mayor of the community of Halton Hills, to the people who are here today and represented by a newspaper from that community, that this government will stand behind the obstetrics program at a viable hospital in that community.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton): My question is for the Minister of Health.

Interjection.

Mr Chudleigh: Well, there might be a small twist on it.

Earlier today, Minister, there were, I think, about 300 citizens from Halton Hills, who were at the Legislature rallying to save the obstetrics unit at Georgetown hospital. They brought with them 7,000 petitions that were raised in just eight days. So you can see that a hospital in a small town is a very passionate issue, Minister, and I appreciate very much the answer you gave to the leader of the third party just a few minutes ago.

Obviously, this is a new area we're trending into. There are three campuses of this hospital, the Georgetown campus being the smallest of the three. There is obviously a way to manage these hospitals that isn't currently in vogue in Ontario.

I'm asking, Minister, would you strike a committee and put some people from Georgetown on this committee, some people from Halton Hills, to try to find a solution that will not let the big hospitals beat up on the small guy? Will you do that, Mr Minister?

Hon Mr Smitherman: It's interesting, isn't it, that the member goes out of his way to mention that there are some significant challenges associated with operating a three-site hospital that was the design of the government he was a part of for eight years? Let's face the facts: There are challenges at William Osler hospital and they're very significant, and it's your creation.

1510

The fact remains that the local community needs a stronger voice here, but the same honourable member who opposed the government taking powers through Bill 8 to be more involved now stands in his place and says, "Get involved and manage the local hospital," when you know that voluntary board governance is the principle of hospital operation in our province. You guys always want to have it both ways.

I say to the honourable member, though—I said it to the mayor earlier and I say it to this House again; I said it

to Bruce Hood earlier in the week—I'm going to work my way through these issues with the local communities. The hospital in Halton Hills can be assured that at the end of this process it will continue to play the important role that it has for a long, long time, that it will be a viable, community-based acute care facility. We will make sure that's the case.

Mr Chudleigh: Minister, we appreciate that commitment and we look forward to that fulfillment in the way in which it's going to be fulfilled. You've mentioned there are challenges; yes, we all recognize there are challenges. We recognize that a stronger voice is needed from some of the community that is being affected by the decisions of the William Osler board of directors. Making sure that stronger voice takes place for the people of Halton Hills, for the people of Georgetown who are serviced by the Georgetown campus; making sure that stronger voice is a fair one, is a just one and is one that works with the three-campus type of action that the William Osler hospital has: That is what we're interested in today. Minister, will you commit to make sure that happens in the future, as you have made sure it will happen in the immediate area?

Hon Mr Smitherman: The assurance I'll give the honourable member is that I'm interested in a solution that helps to get a stronger community voice in the relationship with the board there. But I just say to the member that I'm having a hard time figuring how you think you can have it both ways. In the House today, in front of your local community, you present yourself as the guy who sees the government as the solution point for issues with respect to the hospital. But you stood in your place, alongside all your other members, and voted against a bill that is designed to make sure we can enforce the accountability that Ontarians expect. All the little chirping from the recent arrival in the front bench notwithstanding, the fact of the matter is very clear: We have serious challenges at William Osler hospital and we're going to work through those, but the challenges we have there are of their design.

WATER QUALITY

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I have a question to the Minister of the Environment. Minister, you've already broken your promises to stop sprawl and protect water at the source. You've just quietly given approval to the big pipe in King City. Citizens, councillors of King City and respected environmental groups like Great Lakes United have warned you how the big pipe will degrade the Humber watershed. The pipe extension will damage streams and headwaters that supply water to Toronto. So much for your stated commitment to protecting water at the source. Minister, they are calling on you to revoke your certificate of approval and hold a full environmental assessment. Will you do that?

Hon Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment): We're very aware of the big pipe situation. The Ministry of the Environment has a responsibility to ensure that the environment and the people in the

community are protected, and that is exactly what we are doing. I am very proud of this government's record in terms of source water protection, the initiatives we've taken to date and the investments we are making. I know the residents in that community are certainly going to benefit from the due diligence this ministry is exercising on that project.

Ms Churley: Minister, you've already broken the spirit of your new greenbelt legislation, which we passed this afternoon. You keep on trying to paint your government as committed—and, Mike Colle, you should know better—to protecting prime agricultural land, environmentally sensitive areas and watersheds from urban sprawl. But you still don't get it. The decision to approve the big pipe will encourage sprawl on the Oak Ridges moraine. You still don't get it. King City lies on class 1 agricultural land, on the moraine, at the headwaters of the Humber river. It is exactly the kind of area that needs protection from sprawl. Minister, I ask you again, will you show your commitment to stop sprawl, keep your promise, do the right thing and stop the big pipe?

Hon Mrs Dombrowsky: I must say, I'm very surprised that the honourable member would stand in her place and lecture us about doing the right thing today, when her party is preventing this Legislature from passing very important legislation that would enable family members to be with their loved ones during a very difficult time.

So I'm sorry; it's very, very difficult for me to accept that from the member opposite. I would ask them to do the right thing today and enable this piece of legislation that is intended to support families. Allow it to pass today.

FAMILY MEDICAL LEAVE

Mr John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex): I have a question for the Minister of Labour. Earlier this year, the government introduced Bill 56, the family medical leave act.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order. I am unable to hear. The member from Eglinton-Lawrence and the member from Toronto-Danforth, I call you to order. Thank you.

The member from Perth-Middlesex.

Mr Wilkinson: So that there is no confusion in this House by any of the members, can you explain to me what this bill does and why it is so important?

Hon Christopher Bentley (Minister of Labour): The family medical leave bill is all about compassion. The bill will provide up to eight weeks of job-protected leave so that workers can be with a dying family member. Imagine that you have a job and you learn that your mother or your father, your spouse or your child is terminally ill. You then have an impossible choice: a choice to either keep your job or be with your family member during their last days.

The family medical leave bill provides up to eight weeks of job protection. It dovetails with the federal em-

ployment insurance benefits. Today I brought a motion asking for unanimous consent to have this matter voted on—if people want to vote against it, that's fine; but just to have it voted on—and the NDP blocked it. They claim to be the great defenders of the workers, but they're really the great pretenders. This is about compassion, about justice and about fairness. The NDP blocked it. That's shameful.

Mr Wilkinson: I'm reviewing Hansard, and I find that every member present for second reading of this bill voted in favour of it. So why is it not becoming the law today?

Hon Mr Bentley: I'm referring to the House leader.

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): In fact, the member is right. This bill passed second reading. It's in third reading. Nobody requested committee hearings. Here's what's on the record. Page 1630, April 21, 2004, Mr Michael Prue: "The reality is, this bill is going to pass. It has to pass because you have to jig it all with the federal legislation. I hope all members of the Legislature will understand that this bill—what can I say?—needs to be passed. It should be done rapidly."

Rosario Marchese, page 1530, Bill 56 debate: I'm happy to speak to Bill 56 ... I've got to admit that I haven't canvassed all New Democrats, but I suspect they will be supporting this bill. I certainly will be supporting the bill."

Mr Peter Kormos, page 1620: "So is it bad legislation? No, and you're not going to hear a New Democrat say, 'Oh, this is horrible legislation; we've got to block it.'"

Pass the bill, please.

1520

DEAF-BLIND SERVICES

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. June is Deaf-Blind Awareness Month, and I think it's appropriate that I put this question to you today. In the gallery today, in the east lobby, we have several members of Ontario's deaf-blind community, each with their communications assistant and advocate. They're here on behalf of the Rotary Cheshire Homes community, including Ms Joyce Thompson. I'd like members to welcome them to the House today.

For some time now, this community has sought government assistance for a modest plan to expand unique services to their particular community. There are many services that MCSS provides, but not for this community, which is unique in that they have become deaf-blind after birth. Minister, would you agree to find some time to meet with this group, who have in the past requested an opportunity to meet with you to explain to you in detail what it is they need as specific services? Would you agree to meet with them following question period today to arrange a time when they can have a more fulsome discussion with you?

Hon Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's

issues): I hope the member opposite knows that I hope it is well convenient for people to come to this House. Many people who have various kinds of disabilities have a very difficult time with transportation, with coming to the House, and often our ministry has done such tremendous outreach to talk to people across the province. I hope you don't use this as some kind of opportunity to exploit people's disabilities.

What I will tell this member is that the individuals who are here in this House today provide a tremendously important service to their community, and we in this ministry are doing everything we can to stretch every single dollar we have so that we can help people who need these services, and in fact find ways to expand the services.

Let me say to the member opposite that we knew when we walked in as government that we were going to do three things: We were going to better health care, we were going to better education and we would help vulnerable people. What I know is that after eight years of your government, we have been saddled with such a deficit that it will take us much longer to do everything we know needs to be done in this sector, and I commit to this member that I will work on that.

Mr Klees: I am absolutely astonished at that response. Minister, all I was asking on behalf of this community is that you would take the time, even if it's only five minutes, to meet with them to discuss the specific request they have been making of your ministry, and they have had no response. They asked for a meeting with you; the response they got ignored the request for a meeting. This is not about partisan politics; this is about you, as the minister responsible for this community, to simply take the time and listen to them. I'm not even asking you to agree with them. At least give them the opportunity to share with you their concerns. Will you please just agree to do that?

Hon Ms Pupatello: Let me assure this member opposite, I will do more than just meet with these people: I will meet them today and we will meet repeatedly. Not only that, our ministry has been working on this issue since October 2, since this cabinet was sworn in. We had a look at what was going on in the Ministry of Community and Social Services, which your government used as a punching bag for the last eight years, and, in particular, when services should have been enhanced over those many years. The community you are speaking about today continues to grow, and you as a cabinet minister acknowledged in your eight years as government that those services increased every year, yet you did not commit the appropriate funding required. But we are committed to helping, and I guarantee that member that we will work on this issue, as we have been since we became cabinet in this government.

Mr Klees: Mr Speaker, on a point of order: I want to thank the minister for agreeing to meet with this community today.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): That is not a point of order.

COMMUNITY REINVESTMENT FUND

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): My question is to the Minister of Finance. You will know that a number of northern communities are worried because they're getting signals from your ministry that the community reconciliation fund, which is in place to offset the downloading, set by the Tory government, on to the municipalities, will not be adjusted this fiscal year. Could you please reassure the communities of northern Ontario that that is not the case and that you will adjust the funds so that the end of this year is revenue-neutral?

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): I think I would invite my friend, who is one of the more rational, saner and brighter members of that caucus, to reassure this House that his party is going to change their mind, even at this very late moment, and agree to vote for third reading and full passage of the act that will allow individual family members medical leave in cases where they have a sick member at home and need care.

I will reassure him that the measures we've taken in our budget this year, including the elements of the northern prosperity fund, will begin to transform the northern economy. In respect to the community reinvestment fund, we have set aside specific funds in our budget to ensure that there is no detrimental effect on northern communities. This is the first budget that has specifically addressed the very serious circumstances confronted by northerners. That's one of the things this caucus is most proud of in our budget.

Mr Bisson: It's kind of passing strange on the answer. I'm going to ask you this question: Why in heck, then, did your ministry send letters to the municipalities of northern Ontario saying that they should expect, that quite possibly, there will not be a reconciliation? I stand here and ask you the question because your ministry sent a letter to northern municipalities that said, "Hang on to your socks, people in northern Ontario. It's quite possible that there's not going to be a readjustment and a recalculation for this upcoming fiscal year." So I want a clear "yes" answer, that you are going to make sure there's reconciliation at the end of the year. "Yes" is the answer I'm looking for.

Hon Mr Sorbara: I think I answered comprehensively. My friend from Kenora-Rainy River—I simply invite him to give us a "yes" answer now to tell us that the eight members of the New Democratic Party are going to give their unanimous consent to bringing back the bill that will grant medical leave to individual workers who need medical leave to look after sick family members. I invite him to do that. I plead with him to do that. I tell him that his voters right across the north, his supporters, are anxious that they take that generous step and make sure that bill gets passed today.

EDUCATION

Ms Laurel C. Broten (Etobicoke-Lakeshore): My question is for the Minister of Education. Teachers in my

riding of Etobicoke-Lakeshore are concerned about the increase in the amount of outside tutoring that their students are seeking. They're telling me that resources are not allocated properly in the curriculum. As a result, students are turning to private tutoring to fill in the gap.

They want their students to excel, but they're concerned about the fact that students are forced to give up their after-school free time, when they should be playing with friends or spending time with their family, in order to succeed in the classroom. What is our government doing to help kids get the education they need in the classroom and eliminate the need for after-hours tutoring for our kids?

Hon Gerard Kennedy (Minister of Education): I appreciate the question and all the advocacy the member has done on behalf of constituents who want to reduce not just tutoring, but who want to increase the chances that students have in school. Today we announced, thanks to the Minister of Finance, in the budget \$160 million worth of support for literacy and numeracy in our schools. We're not going to have people depend on having to buy help; we're going to give the help where it belongs: in our publicly funded schools, for every student who is there.

Starting this fall, there will be lower class sizes. The school I was in had classes of 28 kids; a tremendous teacher is going to have 23 kids, instead, next year. Their grade 1 is going down to 17 kids per classroom. Rather than as they did under the past government, having to buy extra help, they're going to get it from their publicly funded teachers.

They're going to get individualized attention at an early age, when it can do them the most good. It's what we know works and what we've, unfortunately, up to now made our children wait for for too long. They need wait no longer.

Ms Broten: That's great news. I know that the students, parents and teachers in my riding will be very pleased. They want to make sure our government ensures a full education—reading, writing and math—in the classroom. Can you tell me how a child in an early grade in Etobicoke-Lakeshore, in one of our schools, will benefit from the announcement made this morning?

1530

Hon Mr Kennedy: Boards are now in the process of hiring an extra 1,100 teachers. They'll be in Etobicoke-Lakeshore, they'll be in every part of this province, doing what needs to be done for our students. There will be 16,000 lead teachers, four for every elementary school—two in literacy, two in numeracy—with extra training able to help all the rest of the teaching staff. We will train every one of 36,000 primary teachers, including 9,000 this summer. That will be underway to make sure that they have access to the latest resources and benefits.

We're dedicating \$15 million to make sure that, when it comes to literacy and numeracy, this plan is able to provide the resources they need. We don't just have the dollars and a plan that we know will work. The school I was in today has a 100% increase in the number of

students who can now read and write at a high level because one of our pilot projects. It was one of the worst-performing schools; it's now one of the better-performing schools. We are looking forward to the results. Starting in September, parents should know that there's going to be a big boost in the instructional quality in our schools, thanks to this initiative.

GOVERNMENT CONTRACT

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leeds-Grenville): I have a question for the Minister of Finance. It has been public knowledge for some time now that you gave political direction to Decima to subcontract work to Paul Martin's campaign manager, David Herle. Earlier this week at estimates, you were asked for cost figures with respect to that matter. You've had some time to become apprised of what was involved: the time involved, the cost involved. Are you prepared to reveal that information today? How much did your government pay Mr Herle for his sage advice?

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): Returning to the issues that were being discussed at estimates, I simply tell my friend that there was no contract between our government, the Ministry of Finance and Mr Herle or Mr Herle's associate or company. The work that was done for the Ministry of Finance was done through an agency-of-record contract with Decima Research. The invoices and the billing from Decima Research have not yet been submitted to the government for payment. When those invoices are submitted, I would be delighted to report to the member and tell him exactly how much the Ministry of Finance paid Decima Research for the work that was done.

Mr Runciman: I guess the minister is suggesting that no one in his political office or otherwise advised the agency of record that Mr Herle was the appropriate individual to subcontract to. Is that what he's suggesting here today, that there was no knowledge in his office, no knowledge in the Ministry of Finance, that this was the firm, the individual with direct ties to the Prime Minister, the campaign manager for Paul Martin? Is he suggesting that's the case today? I'd like to have him reveal if indeed that is the case. I don't think there'll be too many believers across the province.

We need to have those facts. We need to have them, I think, before Monday. He should be tabling that figure today. How much did they pay this gentleman—the campaign manager for Paul Martin—for that work? And also, I think we could talk at length about the appropriateness of this individual being retained. But for today, we will settle for knowing how much of taxpayers' money was spent for the campaign manager for Paul Martin.

Hon Mr Sorbara: I'm delighted to tell my friend that the engagement was done under very strict rules. They are done under rules that ensure value for money. They are done under rules that ensure that only competent contractors can qualify. I will tell him that these are very tough rules, but they're very fair rules. I will tell him that

they are the rules implemented by his government when he was in power. We adopted those rules, we applied those rules, and those rules resulted in a fair contract.

They were not the same rules that allowed those folks over there while they were in power to pay our dear friend Paul Rhodes over \$1 million in untendered contracts, to pay under a different system our dear friend Tom Long some \$2.3 million in unpaid contracts, and to even allow the former Premier of this province to receive a contract from Ontario Hydro—as if he didn't get enough as Premier—for some \$18,000.

WEST NILE VIRUS

Ms Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Yesterday, you told this House that you were making an alteration to the funding formula for the West Nile virus program. In your description of that, you made it sound that the NDP was in some way fabricating a letter that your ministry sent to medical officers of health including a 22% cut to the West Nile virus funding. Oddly enough, Hamilton's medical officer of health, Dr Elizabeth Richardson, also received the same letter, and it indicated—surprise, surprise—that we in Hamilton also needed to expect a 22% cut in our West Nile virus funding.

Minister, why are you cutting the money for this dangerous disease and trying to camouflage it with the kind of rhetoric that you foisted upon us yesterday in this House?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): The interesting thing is that yesterday I had in the House the opportunity to do a couple of things. One of those was to tell the people of the province of Ontario that the strategy that Ontario has for West Nile virus this year is a good one. It adequately protects them, and I think that Dr Basur's work on this front is something we should all applaud.

I will tell the honourable member that I had the opportunity in scrum to remind people that while there are allocations that are made, not all of the money gets spent. For last year, Hamilton is a very good example of over-projection. They were given \$1.3 million and they didn't spend \$300,000 of it. What is that in a percentage term? It's 23%. The point here is that our health units have adequate funding. We have an adequate program that is going to protect the people in the province of Ontario.

But you're a new member, and you still have an opportunity to make a difference on an issue in this Legislature today, and that is on behalf of the families of the province of Ontario. I'd like the honourable member in her next question to stand in her place and tell me how proud she must be to be part of a caucus that is choosing to block family medical leave for Ontario families.

Ms Horwath: In fact, I actually participated in the drafting of Hamilton's budget and understand the plan for West Nile for Hamilton for this year. The reality is,

the bottom line is, that this cut is going to have a significant effect on Hamilton's budget.

Notwithstanding that, you claimed yesterday that you had already consulted with health units across the province. In fact, you claimed that your 22% cut was one of the changes that people felt were necessary, yet not only Hamilton but, in terms of health officials, Barbara Yaffe, Toronto's acting medical officer of health, was not one of those happy campers who asked for a 22% cut. She said, "I am very concerned about what the impact will be.... We're not asking for more than we got last year, but we really can't do with less either."

Minister, when you cut municipalities in the middle of their year—and yes, notwithstanding your misstep yesterday, the middle of the year, because it starts in January for municipalities, not April—you make it very hard for them to do more—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order. Minister of Health?

Hon Mr Smitherman: I don't know what's going on. I don't know what they did at caucus lunch today, but let me say it again for the honourable member: Last year, Hamilton did not spend 23% of what they asked for, and this is the situation in many other parts of the province of Ontario as well.

We have a good program this year for the West Nile virus. But the honourable member ducked the essential issue of the day, which is why is she so proud to stand in her place and be part of a caucus which, on a day when it had an opportunity to simply say yes and allow honourable members the privilege and opportunity to stand in their place and cast a vote, yea or nay, in favour of an initiative that would have helped to unite families in a time of crisis—why is it that this new influx of energy in the NDP caucus is all of a sudden drawn right down to the lowest common denominator with the rest of them, which is, trying to leverage the families in the province of Ontario—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question?

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

Mr John Milloy (Kitchener Centre): My question is also to the Minister of Health. Residents in my riding of Kitchener Centre are frustrated. There's a real shortage of family doctors in my area and, at the same time, a large number of foreign-trained doctors who are unable to practise. The message my constituents sent me in the recent election is that we should do everything possible as a government to get these highly skilled individuals practising medicine in Ontario. While I understand that we need to maintain a high standard for competency and skill, I would like to see a reduction of barriers in the accreditation process, particularly in one of the most problematic areas: assessment.

I was wondering if the Minister of Health would outline the new funding that he announced yesterday to increase access to physicians and how it will help reduce barriers facing internationally trained doctors in my community and throughout the province.

1540

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): There is no doubt that a real challenge and perhaps a crisis has been created in this province by the actions of these two parties when they were in government. First off, these guys made the decision to close down medical schools because they didn't think doctors were important, and they took three or four years to get the point and get on with rebuilding it.

As a new government, we put our money where our mouth is. The fact of the matter is that yesterday, as a result of our initiative, we were able to announce \$11.5 million in additional funding to double the assessment and training capacity. These are the key barriers that stand in the way of communities all across the province being able to depend upon, to rely upon, the services of medical doctors.

We launched IMG Ontario. We simplified it; it's now one-stop. In addition, we worked with the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario to support fast-track assessment and registration for up to 40 international medical graduates who are practising outside the province of Ontario. In the few short days since we've done that, we've already begun to repatriate doctors from other jurisdictions to the province of Ontario.

Mr Milloy: I thank the minister for his answer. I know the people of Kitchener Centre will be pleased with the efforts he's making. Nevertheless, I'm concerned that this initiative alone will not be enough to give the residents of Ontario, and more specifically the residents in my riding, the access to family health care they need. So I'd like the minister to tell me what else he's doing to improve Ontarians' access to health care.

Hon Mr Smitherman: Yesterday we had the opportunity to make the IMG announcement. Uday Shankardass, the president of the Association of International Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario, said this, "The establishment of IMG Ontario represents a significant step toward creating more opportunities for Ontario's internationally trained physicians to integrate into the health care system." When we think about the word "integration," our mind comes to family health teams, bringing doctors, nurses, nurse practitioners and other medical practitioners together to operate on behalf of patients in a team approach.

That's not all. In addition to building 150 family health teams, we're also supporting and encouraging and excited about the progress being made with the new northern Ontario medical school. It has been fully accredited and will be taking students starting in September 2005.

These initiatives are designed to reverse the very sad reality, which is their record and their record.

Hon Christopher Bentley (Minister of Labour): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I seek unanimous consent to call the order for third reading of Bill 56, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 in respect of family medical leave and other matters and to have the question put immediately without debate or amendment.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Do we have unanimous consent? I heard a no.

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leeds-Grenville): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I seek unanimous consent for additional time for one more question. We only had three today because of lengthy responses. I would ask for one more question for one of our members.

The Speaker: Do we have unanimous consent for one more question? I heard a no.

VISITOR

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: When others were introducing their former pages earlier, I neglected to introduce Laura Konkell, who is from Toronto-Danforth and likes it here so much she often comes back to volunteer. Welcome, Laura.

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I seek unanimous consent to move the following motion and to have the question on the motion put immediately without debate or amendment: that the standing committee on general government be authorized to meet during the summer adjournment to consider Bill 3, An Act to protect anaphylactic students.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Do we have unanimous consent? I heard a no.

PETITIONS

TAXATION

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I'm pleased to present a petition to the Legislative Assembly to force Premier McGuinty to obey the taxpayer protection law.

"Whereas the McGuinty government's 2004 budget will break the taxpayer protection law by not conducting a referendum on tax increases; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty signed an election pledge on September 11, 2003, not to raise taxes without the explicit consent of voters through a referendum; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty promised in TV ads not to raise taxes by one penny on working families; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty pledged in writing to obey the taxpayer protection law, which requires a referendum before increasing taxes;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To ensure that all of the McGuinty government's tax increases are put before the people of Ontario in a referendum."

I will be presenting all these petitions to page Peter Lyu of Oak Ridges to table in the House today. Thank you, Peter.

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I have the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need;

"Those with reduced ability to pay—including seniors, low-income families and the working poor—will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments;

"Elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

"There was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province."

This has been signed by literally hundreds of residents of my constituency, and I have affixed my signature as well.

VISITORS

Mr David Oraziatti (Sault Ste Marie): I have a brief petition to the Legislature, and I'd like to read it.

"We, the undersigned, would like to welcome to the Ontario Legislature from Sault Ste Marie page Vivienne Steele and her family: her mother, Wendy Steele, as well as her brother, Alexander Steele, who is 15, and her sisters, Evelyn Steele and Audrey Steele, who are nine and six."

WATER QUALITY

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): "Whereas the riding of Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant is made up of many small communities which have little or no access to municipal water services in our homes, churches, halls and other public buildings but must be on private wells; and

"Whereas these buildings are now required to abide by regulation 170 of the Safe Drinking Water Act, which calls for expensive, unnecessary reports and tests if the buildings are to be used; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario maintains it will institute all recommendations of the O'Connor report, including number 84, which recommends provincial funding when approved systems are not economically viable for the owner; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment agrees the regulation is flawed;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Ministry of the Environment to put enforcement of regulation 170 on hold until either a provincial funding program is put in place to assist rural public buildings and the organizations they house meet the regulation, or a change to the regulation is made to make it more reasonable and appropriate."

I agree with this petition.

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I have a petition sent to me by the folks up in Kawartha Lakes. It reads:

"The undersigned petition the province of Ontario, our Premier and our Minister of Health to fast-track family doctors into the city of Kawartha Lakes."

It's signed by thousands and by me as well.

SENIORS' PROGRAMS

Mr Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): On behalf of Mr Bhatla, president of the Thornhill Asian seniors' club, I would like to read a petition, which says:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas we, the seniors of Thornhill, would like to thank Premier Dalton McGuinty and the Honourable Greg Sorbara, Minister of Finance, and our Thornhill member of the provincial Parliament, Mario G. Racco, for allocating funding for seniors in the spring 2004 budget,

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We ask that the senior programs in home care continue to receive funding and awareness so that we can be healthier and happier as we continue to live in our own homes for as long as we choose."

I'll sign my name to it.

1550

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly regarding support for chiropractic services under the Ontario health insurance plan. There are many whereases, and I will skip those so that other members can get on.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 8, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province."

SENIOR CITIZENS' HOUSING

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas residents living at Patricia Gardens seniors' supportive housing in the city of Dryden have been living under undue stress for nine months due to a labour dispute; and

"Whereas the board of Patricia Gardens is trying to substantially reduce the supportive housing services offered prior to the labour dispute, therefore contradicting the government's stated long-term-care policy and not in the best interests of the seniors in the Dryden area; and

"Whereas if the elimination of services is allowed to take place many of our frail seniors will be forced to live in a long-term-care home which has an exceptionally long waiting list; and

"Whereas the Patricia Gardens board is informing the residents and family members that the elimination of services is due to a reduction in government funding grants; and

"Whereas supportive housing services need to be increased, not decreased, so seniors can live as independently as possible before needing full-time care in a long-term-care facility;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to intervene in the current labour dispute and ensure the level of supportive housing services prior to the labour dispute is maintained."

This is signed by hundreds of residents of the Dryden area, and I affix my signature as well.

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly.

"Whereas the elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic services will no longer be able to access the health care they need;

"Those with reduced ability to pay—including seniors, low-income families and the working poor—will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments;

"Whereas elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to the government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

"Whereas there was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province."

I'm pleased to present this.

And I want to just say, with 30 seconds of indulgence, that we're proud of all the young pages who serve here. I'm particularly proud of this young man. His name is Cameron McMeekin. He's a nephew. Cameron, you've done a great job and I'm really proud of you.

SCHOOL ZONE

Mr Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas northbound traffic on Highway 15 coming into and through the village of Franktown, Ontario, is causing a serious danger to schoolchildren, school staff and residents of the village;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"That the boundaries of Franktown be extended to include Calvary Christian Academy;

"That the highway in front of the above-stated school be declared a school zone."

I have signed that petition.

LITERACY PROGRAMS

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities funds Ontario literacy programs; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities has cut funding to literacy programs such as the Sioux-Hudson Literacy Council; and

"Whereas these non-profit, community-based, client-centred programs provide free help to all area adults who desire to upgrade their English, math, computer and other related skills;

"We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"(1) To reinstate literacy program funding to former levels;

"(2) To guarantee access to literacy programs in rural communities;

"(3) To provide adequate funding for daily access to literacy programs; and

"(4) To promote the importance of literacy programs for Ontario."

This petition is signed by hundreds of residents of the Sioux Lookout area, and I affix my signature as well.

STATUS OF BILL 56

Mr Shafiq Qaadri (Etobicoke North): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads as follows:

"Whereas the NDP—the New Democratic Party—"is blocking passage of Bill 56, the family medical leave act;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"To pass this important legislation today."

I have already signed it and present it to page Samuel.

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need;

"Those with reduced ability to pay—including seniors, low-income families and the working poor—will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments;

"Elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

"There was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, the government and the province of Ontario."

I affix my name in full support.

PENSION PLANS

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Stelpipe Ltd and Welland Pipe Ltd are currently operating under the protection of the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act (CCAA), as part of the restructuring process being undertaken by Stelco Inc; and

"Whereas there is a significant unfunded liability in the Stelpipe and Welland Pipe pension plans for hourly employees; and

"Whereas there will be a significant negative impact on the pensions of both active employees and retirees in the event of a windup of these pension plans; and

"Whereas the pension benefits guarantee fund (PBGF) does not protect the entire amount of accrued pension benefits; and

"Whereas the PBGF may not have sufficient assets to provide such protection;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"(1) to amend the provisions of the PBGF in order that it provides complete coverage and protection for the accrued pension benefits of all pension plan members;

"(2) to amend the financing provisions for the PBGF in order to ensure that sufficient funds are available to provide for the complete protection of all accrued pension benefits;

"(3) to take interim action as required in order to provide immediate protection of the accrued pension benefits of both active employees and retirees of Stelpipe and Welland Pipe."

It's signed by thousands, as well as myself.

STATUS OF BILL 56

Mr Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the NDP is blocking passage of Bill 56, the family medical leave act;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"To pass this important legislation today."

It's amazing how quickly the people out there can react to this stuff.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It's my pleasure to present a petition, and I appreciate the member for Parry Sound-Muskoka's giving up his time so I can read this petition.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas recreational trailers kept at parks and campgrounds in Ontario are being assessed by the Municipal Property Assessment Corp (MPAC) and are subject to property taxes; and

"Whereas owners of these trailers are seasonal and occasional residents who contribute to the local tourism economy without requiring significant municipal services; and

"Whereas the added burden of this taxation will make it impossible for many families of modest income to afford their holiday sites at parks and campgrounds;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:...

"That the tax not be imposed in 2004; and that no such tax be introduced without consultation with owners of the trailers and trailer parks, municipal governments, businesses, the tourism sector..."

HEALTH CARE

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): "Whereas the Liberal government has announced in their budget that they are delisting key health services such as routine eye exams, chiropractic and physiotherapy services; and

"Whereas abandoning support for these services will place greater demand on other health care sectors such as physicians, emergency wards and after-hours clinics; and

"Whereas no Ontario citizen should be denied access to necessary medical care because of lack of funds;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To reverse the delisting of eye exams, chiropractic and physiotherapy services and restore funding for these important and necessary services."

I'm pleased to present both these petitions at once.

1600

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Re: support for chiropractic services in Ontario health insurance plan

"Whereas elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need;

"Those with reduced ability to pay—including seniors, low-income families and the working poor—will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments;

"Elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

"There was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province."

It's signed by thousands of people and by myself as well.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ONTARIO HERITAGE AMENDMENT ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LE PATRIMOINE DE L'ONTARIO

Resuming the debate adjourned on June 14, 2004, on the motion for second reading of Bill 60, An Act to amend the Ontario Heritage Act / Projet de loi 60, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le patrimoine de l'Ontario.

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): I ask for consent to continue the lead from the previous day.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): The member for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant is asking for unanimous consent to continue the leadoff of the official opposition, in that the original speaker is not here today. Agreed? Agreed.

Mr Barrett: I do thank all present for that opportunity. As we've heard, Bill 60, the Ontario Heritage Amendment Act, contains a list of significant changes aimed at protecting and preserving Ontario's valuable heritage. I'll be focusing my remarks on those that apply to marine heritage in Ontario, by and large making reference to those wrecks and artifacts that lie on crown land beneath the surface of the water of our Great Lakes.

I take particular interest in marine heritage. It builds on a consultation, legislative and committee work that I helped spearhead with a private members' bill on the subject in 1999. Bill 113, the Ontario Marine Heritage Act, 1999, was introduced in this House on November 15. It would have prohibited the taking of artifacts from

marine heritage sites and it would have imposed tougher penalties for those who broke the law.

I'm happy to say that the bill we're debating today echoes many of the goals we aimed to achieve back in 1999. On that note, I would like to draw on some of the past work of our government, work that was done to help understand the nature of the proposed legislation we're examining today.

I'm from a commercial fishing town, Port Dover. It's also a commercial diving town. Much of the work involves the repair and installation of wellheads for the natural gas industry. Over the years we've seen a considerable number of recreational divers and charter boats. It's an industry that's becoming very significant, not only in Port Dover, the inner bay on Lake Erie, but for many, many other harbours across the Great Lakes.

In 1998, a friend of mine from Port Dover, Jim Murphy, wrote me a letter asking for tougher marine heritage protection for the shipwrecks and artifacts, the hundreds and hundreds of shipwrecks that lie beneath the lakes. I quote from his letter—

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): Tell them about that story—

Mr Barrett: I may do that, comrade. I quote from this letter from Mr Murphy:

"With a province-wide diving community of several thousand divers, it is imperative we have a strong protection mechanism in place to protect these sites from looting divers." Under our current laws, the Ontario Heritage Act does not specifically address marine issues. You will not find words like "marine" or "shipwreck" in the Ontario Heritage Act. People tell me the Ontario Heritage Act needs to be supplemented with a very clear message on the protection of marine heritage sites. With respect to other jurisdictions, considerable work has been done in the state of Michigan, for example, and in the province of Nova Scotia.

In addition to Mr Murphy, many other divers, historians and conservationists have argued for something like the Marine Heritage Act to ensure that wrecks lying in Ontario's waters are protected. It was input like this that pushed me to draft private member's legislation to deal specifically with the protection of marine heritage.

On November 10, 1999, the 24th anniversary of the sinking of the Edmund Fitzgerald, I introduced my intention to announce the marine heritage legislation. We had a news conference in Port Dover at our local Dover Dairy Bar. As I mentioned, there are hundreds of wrecks in our Great Lakes. Probably the first ship lost would be the Griffon in 1679. If you go back 325 years ago, on September 18, 1679, the French explorer LaSalle watched his ship, the Griffon, set sail on Lake Huron, only to vanish without a trace, and to this day, the Griffon remains the quest of countless recreational divers and historians.

The first European explorers who came to Canada and to Ontario arrived by way of water. We're all aware of the contribution of the Atlantic fishing industry, the fur trade, and more latterly, the lumber trade in the mid-

1800s: again, endless travel moving these goods along the inland waterways. The Great Lakes eventually became one of the busiest shipping lanes in the world and became the backbone of commerce, not only in Ontario, but also Quebec, Manitoba, and of course, our neighbouring American states.

In 1880, there were over 3,000 commercial vessels on the lakes. You can imagine during those times how many of those foundered, went up on rocks or collided with other vessels: 3,000 vessels in 1880. It's truly astounding when you figure today there is something in the order of maybe 200 or so lying in our Great Lakes.

Increased traffic presents a greater risk for mishap, a greater risk for accidents—the same holds true on our waterways—whether it's on the road or on a shipping lane. Couple that with the arrival of a sudden raging storm, a collision with another vessel, an error in navigation, and that can sink a vessel quite easily.

Some say the Great Lakes have an insatiable appetite for sailors, for their passengers and the ships themselves. Cargo ships or canoes, our lakes and rivers play no favourites. Once a boat leaves port, there is always a chance it will run into a gale, an exposed rock or another ship. Lack of communication, lack of proper navigational aids, and in some cases, ship wreckers made travel especially dangerous in the 18th and 19th centuries.

The dangers faced by sailors differed throughout the lakes. Lake Erie, for example, is shallow. The average depth is about 30 feet. Lake Erie can be vicious in any kind of a strong wind. It whips up quite rapidly. Lake Superior, as we all know, is very deep and very cold, with a history of furious November gales like the one that put down the Edmund Fitzgerald. Lakes Huron, Michigan and St Clair also have a track record, and they have proven no less treacherous. Georgian Bay is filled with scores of camouflaged reefs, thousands of rock encrusted islands. They have laid many a good ship and her crew to permanent rest.

I don't know whether anyone here has ever run a boat up on a reef. Probably one of the stupidest things I ever did, I ran a fishing boat up on a reef in the south Atlantic. Regrettably, we hit that reef 12 times. We bounced down over the other side. If anyone has ever come close to either sinking a boat or drowning, I would hope that they would reflect on that when they consider the seriousness of the part of this legislation that enshrines the artifacts and the wrecks on our lakes. In many ways, these wrecks are graveyards. One or two hands were lost in some cases; hundreds of people have perished on these wrecks. They are forgotten, and I think the point of this legislation, certainly the point of work that I've done over the last several years, is to do our best to ensure that at least not every single wreck in the Great Lakes gets stripped.

1610

Ontario clearly has a strong marine history. Many, many people, unfortunately, have perished on the water, shipping merchandise, or protecting our country, for that matter. One cannot help but admire and respect these sailors. We know there are memorials. We have a fairly

recently constructed memorial in Port Dover commemorating those commercial fishermen who over the years have lost their lives on Lake Erie, oftentimes in the early spring or in one of those November gales that I have spoken of. As one travels, you see these memorials. You see them in Lunenburg; you see them in Digby; you see them in Gloucester, Massachusetts. Gloucester, over the centuries, has lost, as I understand, thousands of commercial fishermen and sailors to the Atlantic. We, as citizens of this province, in my view, cannot help but admire and respect these sailors. I feel we should honour their memories, the memories of these men and women, by respecting their resting places. This legislation will do that, and it will help to ensure that others respect them as well.

I made mention of a bit of a close call that I had off the coast of Brazil, and that occurred at 2 o'clock in the morning. We really had no idea what was going on. God was with us. We were able to, through the wind, get pushed off the reef.

I wish to quote an anecdote, really. This is an introduction from a book many will recognize, titled *The Perfect Storm*. It was soon made into a film. My family and I viewed that film. I made sure we viewed the film after we got off the ferry that came across from Portland, Maine, to Yarmouth. And when I attended that film, to my surprise, my colleague Bob Runciman and his family were sitting in the same theatre, by coincidence. But I'll quote a section from the introduction of this book.

"One mid-winter day off the coast of Massachusetts, the crew of a mackerel schooner spotted a bottle with a note in it. The schooner was on Georges Bank, one of the most dangerous fishing grounds in the world ... [T]he captain uncorked the bottle and turned to his assembled crew," and he read the note: "'On Georges Bank with our cable gone our rudder gone and leaking. Two men have been swept away and all hands have been given up as our cable is gone and our rudder is gone. The one that picks this up let it be known. God have mercy on us.'"

"The note was from the *Falcon*, a boat that had set sail from Gloucester the year before. She hadn't been heard from since.... This was the end, and everyone on the boat would have known it. How do men act on a sinking ship? Do they hold each other? Do they pass around the whisky? Do they cry?

"This man wrote; he put down on a scrap of paper the last moments of 20 men in this world. Then he corked the bottle and threw it overboard. There's not a chance in hell, he must have thought. And then he went below again. He breathed in deep. He tried to calm himself. He readied himself for the first shock of sea."

Again, I did talk to a fellow once who did come close to drowning. He was a trucker. He ran his rig off the road on Vancouver Island, on the way out to Tofino. He showed me the lake where this truck went in. He stayed down below, sat at the wheel, totally at peace, with total calm. He was aware that he was breathing in water and completely accepted his fate. A trucker who was following him crawled down the rocks, got the door open, and

pulled him out of the cabin, and this is one person who survived to tell the tale.

Certainly, in the field of diving medicine, a lot of work has been done with respect to how one drowns. I'll quote, in part, a description here: "The instinct not to breathe under water is so strong that it overcomes the agony of running out of air. No matter how desperate the drowning person is, he doesn't inhale until he's on the verge of losing consciousness. At that point, there's so much carbon dioxide in the blood, and so little oxygen, that chemical sensors in the brain trigger an involuntary breath, whether he's under water or not. That is called the break point" in laboratory experiments—something that occurs within the first 87 seconds. There's certainly much more to the research on the last minute, minute and a half, the last two minutes that one has, as their boat has rolled over, in many cases, or as they watch the water come up above their knees and over their head.

Partly because of some of these stories that we hear, and recognizing that thousands and thousands of people in provincial waters have gone down in these wrecks over the centuries—it's for these reasons that I got involved initially and very simply in trying to bring in measures to stop people from stripping wrecks. Hence, the private member's bill in 1999.

I want to make it clear that my legislation was not intended to be a barrier to recreational divers. I did receive many letters and phone calls from divers who were very, very concerned that government was stepping in, in a very intrusive way, and would take away their right to dive. My intention was to educate people about shipwrecks, that they are precious, they're a non-renewable resource, and in my view, and given the loss of lives by and large on the majority of these ship wrecks, they essentially are graveyards for mariners and for their crews.

With this legislation, very clearly, we must strike a balance between protecting and preserving those artifacts and preserving what's left of the wrecks themselves, but at the same time, we have to encourage business. We have to encourage dive tourism, which is growing so rapidly out of many of our Great Lakes ports. I think this is particularly significant in many of the far-flung ports, those communities where time has passed them by with the demise of lake shipping. The death knell for many of our Great Lakes ports occurred with the advent of the railroad and much improved highways and four-lane highways. Tourism is one bright light for many of the isolated towns along our lakes, and dive tourism is certainly in that category.

Under the legislation that I worked on, it would have been an offence to remove a protected artifact from a heritage site unless that person was licensed to do so.

1620

It raises the question: Of the hundreds of wrecks, how many do you designate? I would advocate that in this legislation and through accompanying regulation, the number of designated sites would be small: sites in the order of the *Hamilton* and the *Scourge* in Lake Ontario,

for example; a site like the Atlantic, which went down off the point of Long Point in Lake Erie.

As it stood at the time, a person who found a shipwreck was not required to report the location of the wreck, and oftentimes, when someone comes across a wreck, a newly discovered wreck, they play their cards very close to their chest. It's a very competitive environment, especially those people in the professional dive community. I think of Mike Fletcher, for example, now an internationally known diver and filmmaker who resides near my farm at Port Dover. It's a very competitive environment. When someone finds a new wreck, oftentimes after years and years of research, they're not going to tell anybody. The last thing they want to do is tell the government.

I think it does have merit, and it would be required that anyone who finds a shipwreck notify the Ministry of Culture with respect to the nature of the wreck, what kind of shape it's in, and with respect to the location. And of course there are going to have to be measures in place to ensure that the dive team, the diver who originally found that wreck, would not have that information on the 6 o'clock news the next day. There has to be an arrangement where that can be worked out between the diver and his government.

Further, the bill we put forward would have made it illegal for anyone to knowingly access or enter a prescribed heritage site, and when I say "prescribed" wreck, we're not referring to all the wrecks down there; again, we're referring merely to a handful of wrecks that people would agree need to be protected. I mentioned the Atlantic in Lake Erie. There was a very high-profile, international court case over the Atlantic, where both a Canadian dive team out of Port Dover—in this case, Mike Fletcher—and a group out of California laid claim to the same wreck. The Edmund Fitzgerald: We know where it is; we know who died on the Edmund Fitzgerald. I think there's a consensus that that hull, that wreck, should not be stripped. I know the bell was taken off. I think the bell sits in the city of Detroit in a memorial.

So Bill 113, as it was known at the time, would have made it illegal for anyone to knowingly access or enter one of these prescribed heritage sites or to remove part of a heritage wreck or remove silt or other naturally occurring substances unless he or she was licensed to do so.

I'll move up to the spring of 2000. During the spring of 2000, I did receive a considerable amount of input from both individuals and organizations involved in the business, involved in sport diving. My office received roughly 170 written submissions. We met with a number of prominent organizations, including scuba clubs, of course, dive shop operators, the Ontario Underwater Council, Save Ontario Shipwrecks, Preserve Our Wrecks, and other groups. Many of these groups also latterly came forward before a standing committee of this Legislative Assembly.

As a result of these consultations, I drafted a series of amendments to the bill to try and accommodate the push

back, if you will, that I received in the many e-mails and letters that came in—amendments to the bill for consideration by the general government committee, which is where the bill was referred. These proposed amendments were designed to ensure a balance between protecting and preserving marine heritage, and encouraging tourism through providing access only to those recreational divers deemed responsible.

Again, that's a tough call. The responsibility of divers can only be enhanced through information and education. Legislation and regulation like this helps. I think the real answer is the dive community self-regulating, and policing, if you will, in those cases where there are problems.

The general government committee hearings got underway in October 2000. We received 39 oral and written submissions from these organizations. The majority supported the goals of the proposed legislation. However, there was little consensus on how to get there, how to achieve these goals.

During the committee hearings, Tim Legate, who represented Save Ontario Shipwrecks, made a presentation in which he personally thanked me for bringing forward the bill. He said: "I think it's been one of the most important milestones in marine heritage to come along in many years, not so much because he's got a wonderful bill"—I hear what he's saying—"but because he has elevated the discussion"—Mr Legate is referring to me—"he's brought it ... up to the forefront, he has a bill before the Legislature, and you gentlemen and ladies are sitting here today really looking at the issues of Ontario's marine heritage and the pros and cons."

To that point it had really not been on the radar screen with respect to the dive community. Those marine archaeologists and historians, in many cases, were kind of working quietly on their own. Mr Legate certainly had issues with the bill; however, it really goes without saying that we all agree the protection of our marine heritage should be brought to the forefront. For that reason, I compliment this piece of legislation for getting things on the front burner.

Unfortunately, that protection was not to come at that time. The bill stalled in committee, as so many private members' bills do. However, since those hearings, we've seen a number of government-driven attempts to enshrine in law the protection of marine heritage sites.

I direct your attention to what's referred to as the Government Efficiency Act, passed on November 21, 2002. This legislation built on the consultations, the committee work that went into the private member's bill I've just described, with respect to amending the Ontario Heritage Act to better protect marine heritage sites.

We see these amendments introduced as part six of the Ontario Heritage Act. I'm pleased to see that they have introduced terms like "marine heritage" and "artifacts" in legislation, and ensure that a licence is required for alteration to archaeological sites and for any removal of artifacts from those sites.

The Eves government followed that legislation with consultations throughout 2002-03 for consideration for

further changes to the act. A year ago, Minister David Tsubouchi introduced proposed legislation to reflect those consultations. That was Bill 24, the Ontario Heritage Amendment Act, 2003. This act died on the order paper when the election was called. Its marine heritage aspects have now returned in the Liberal bill we debate today, Bill 60, the bill we see before us.

1630

I'm very pleased to see that this particular piece of government legislation contains those very same amendments with respect to marine heritage.

In particular, Bill 60, as was the case with the previous Bill 24, would prohibit access to significant and sensitive sites without a site-specific licence. These prescribed sites—for example, sites containing human remains—would be the most fragile and sensitive sites, as they should be, in due respect to those men and women—those sailors, passengers, mariners—who lost their lives in that particular wreck.

Obviously that would include the ships I mentioned previously from the War of 1812: the Hamilton and the Scourge. The Edmund Fitzgerald would fall under this category.

As most sites would continue to be accessible, only about 10 or 15 sites would be prescribed by this act. Recreational divers, in my view, should not be significantly affected. However, at those prescribed sites accessibility restrictions would be in effect. Diving would be prohibited within 500 metres, as well as the operation of submersibles or towed survey equipment. I think of side scan sonar equipment. Underwater cameras would be prohibited within 500 metres.

I'm glad to see that public consultation is also proposed for the present government plan. I think this is very important before any regulations go into effect. I can attest to that, given the hundreds of phone calls my office received with respect to the initial crack at this kind of protection. There will be concern. There will be a push back from the recreational diver consumer and community. They may not understand much of what the government is attempting to do. I suggest we all be forewarned.

I look forward to the opportunity to take part as we continue down this road. It's been a number of years now with respect to attempting to protect our marine heritage, attempting to protect that situation where, whenever a new wreck is found anywhere on the Great Lakes, it only takes a few weeks and it's stripped. It's gone. The artifacts end up in somebody's rec room. They end up being sold. They get shipped across the border.

It's very important to continue down this road toward marine heritage protection. I, for one, have been involved since 1999, and I commend the direction this government is taking with respect to the wrecks that are sitting down there on crown land.

Mr O'Toole: It's a pleasure this afternoon to follow the member from Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant. He brought a number of perspectives to the issue, including the perspective of marine heritage. But this bill is about preserving

history—its structures and other artifacts, I suppose—in the broadest sense.

The debate is really quite complicated. I think it's best demonstrated by an issue that's ongoing in my riding of Durham. That's why I'm here this Thursday, the last day of the Legislature, to bring a voice to my constituents from the municipality of Clarington.

But before I do that, I want to pause for a moment and have a real celebration. It's the last day and there's a sense of harmony here today, with the exception, perhaps, of the member from Niagara Centre. You can feel the spirit of co-operation. It's in that spirit that I want to stop for a moment. Last night I had the privilege of passing Bill 33, I think it is, which is the Irish Heritage Day Act. With the co-operation of all caucuses and all MPPs present, it was voted unanimously to receive third reading. Later today, I've been invited with the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario to participate in its actual assent into law. Now that's a privilege. When you see it from birth to—not death—life—

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): To maturity.

Mr O'Toole: To maturity. That's exactly it. It's birth becoming life, sort of like the incubator period.

Mr Kormos: From the point of conception.

Mr O'Toole: Conception, exactly. That's the starting point. This idea conceptually came to me many years ago while watching the debate on the Good Friday accord in Ireland, and it caused me to reflect on Irish heritage and the contribution of the Irish culture to our province of Ontario.

In fact, I would say just a few remarks on that, which I would like to keep for my own record. I am a person of Irish heritage, as I said. I'm very proud of our contribution to the province of Ontario—and of all cultures, but in this specific instance, the Irish. Having been raised in Peterborough—

Interjections.

Mr O'Toole: Peterborough is a great home to many Irish families. But Irish immigrants were among the earliest settlers in Canada. In 1845, they began settling in Ontario in large numbers while fleeing the potato famine. I can hardly say the word “potato.” Can you imagine that, being Irish and having difficulty pronouncing that word? I grew up on them.

The Irish brought with them their values of hard work, devotion to family, service to their community and the hope of a better future for all. If I look around my riding of Durham very specifically, I can hardly go through a single community without being reminded of the great Irish settlers of the area that I have the privilege of representing.

Originally, the area was Darlington and Clarke townships. Prior to that, I believe it was Northumberland township or part of the greater part, before townships were initiated, I think, in the 1800s. All of the area from Toronto right through to Kingston was kind of referred to, I believe, as Northumberland. I could be wrong about that.

I go through communities each day like Tyrone, Enniskillen, Kendal and Kirby. Almost all the little communities in the area can trace themselves back to either the settlers or members of the settlers' families while they started to give birth to new communities right here in Canada. That's a great tradition.

That really brings me back to the whole idea of the preservation of heritage because, as I was mentioning in speaking about the passing of Gord Mills, the former member, while he was there he worked very hard to change the name of the now municipality of Clarington from the municipality of Newcastle. Newcastle dates back to the old country as well. The confusion was that there was already a Newcastle village in the town of Newcastle.

Interjection.

Mr O'Toole: Exactly. So when visitors came and you gave them instructions to go to King Street in Newcastle—there are 15 King Streets in Newcastle because there's King Street in Courtice, King Street in Bowmanville and King Street in the village of Newcastle. All those communities were subordinated under the major name of the regional municipality, so it was mass confusion.

So heritage almost got ignored in all of that debate because the names of communities, whether they're here or they're back in your home country, are extremely important. Whether it's streets or homes that have names, those things are important.

I think of names that are great builders. Just for those listening, in my research I paid some attention to James Joyce. When I was in university, I took a couple of English courses. I could read the books; I could understand them mildly, and others were quite complex.

But that being said, the Irish tradition of the storyteller and the storyteller became clear to me: James Joyce, Brendan Behan—Maeve Binchy is another one. There are a lot of very famous authors of Irish heritage. But I looked more closely. We've all heard the name Marshall McLuhan—the medium is the message—the professor from the University of Toronto. He understood communication and language but also that the medium—that is, the transformation of visual and other modes of communication—in a sense became the message. You see that today with television and multimedia. McLuhan was Irish, but he was way ahead of his time, as most Irish are, in some cases.

1640

Also Timothy Eaton: The Eaton family was a great Irish family; the Eaton Centre and the name and traditions and values of customer service and customer loyalty. Certainly the Eaton family was a builder of the city of Toronto, no question about it.

Then there's Thomas D'Arcy McGee.

I was proud that Hilary Weston was the first Irish-born Lieutenant Governor of Ontario.

Mr Kormos: With a name like Weston?

Mr O'Toole: Well, Hilary Weston is her current name. They have property, of course; whenever you

travel to Ireland, you'll see they have significant property and significant opportunities.

I was pleased to have my name attached to this change. The change has its limitations, as all changes do. For the record, I would just read, in the very few minutes I have here—the intent here was not to confuse people. If you recall the debate during the time of the Good Friday accord, which was the attempt to bring north and south Ireland together and get away from the years and centuries of religious struggle, that was the purpose for the presentation of the bill.

I had the privilege, on my own hook, my own price, of going to Ireland as part of a delegation, a peace accord, as a peace observer. Because I was not a federal member, I was with Sid Ryan and John—

Mr Kormos: The next federal member.

Mr O'Toole: Sid Ryan was with me, and he's running for the NDP in Oshawa. I was with John Murphy as well, who at that time was the president of the power workers—both Irish. I was actually almost in their homes. It was so wonderful to be there with people who are more closely linked to it than I and to travel around.

It was quite unusual, because we were actually in Belfast and Dublin. In Belfast, there was this great, huge conundrum of the parade season. We were there as peace observers, and I saw things that made me feel quite vulnerable. I was right at Falls Road, right at Drumcree. I was there when the drums were beating. It would just scare the hell out of you, really. When they had the big stand-off, CNN was right there. I was with American senators, Canadian senators and a number of other people.

At the end, we were each asked to write a report and submit it to be a statement of our observations. I observed a number of what I'd call violations, and I was glad to move along, shall we say. I wrote a dissenting report, being that motivated. I said the biggest thing is that they had to diversify their culture and quit fighting amongst each other when there are so many other people who would just love to live in their country. That really was my observation: They wouldn't have much to fight about if more people brought more preservatives to the debate.

But really, the more important thing was not to disrupt the importance and traditions of St Patrick's Day, March 17. All I was saying was it's Irish heritage, and on March 17 everyone believes they're Irish, and everyone should. I'm pleased to have my name attached to that small private member's bill and to have the support of this House.

Thank you for that permission to digress, but it does relate to the importance of Bill 60. As a former member of local and regional council in the municipality of Clarington, once Newcastle, I had the privilege of serving on LACAC, which is the local architectural conservation advisory committee. I was part of trying to, as a member of that group and the liaison with council, engage planning, the planning staff—Frank Wu at that time was the director of planning—and others. They pub-

lished a book of properties that were identified and designated, and some of which had not been designated, but it was the work that lay ahead in preservation of our architectural heritage in the area. There are some wonderful streetscapes and country landscapes that are part of heritage as well.

When you talk about heritage, it's hard to separate the buildings and what I call the general terrain of an area: the shores of Lake Ontario, the Oak Ridges moraine. It's all part of the landscape heritage that we expect. In fact, if you drive around my riding, the endangered species today are the old rural barns. The hip roof barns are in shorter and shorter supply, because now they're great, magnificent monuments to architecture. The agricultural industry has very sophisticated farming operations today, and outbuildings and older style barns, the stone foundations, are becoming a somewhat scarce commodity.

But it is on balance that I want to reflect for the few minutes left. If you take the importance that I think everyone here would attribute to preserving heritage, be it cultural, be it physical property or whatever, you do bump into some enveloping or barriers to full, uniform, universal acceptance. I think it really comes down to property rights issues.

I want to put on the record the current debate going on in Clarington, because this is very current. The municipal staff under David Crome, who is the director of planning now—I've sent copies of Bill 60 to them, to members on both sides of the debate, asking for their input. What they're going through here, for those viewing today, is a heritage district. It's in Bowmanville, which I think was incorporated in 1856, and it's in a neighbourhood that's surrounded by, I believe, Wellington Street, Beach Street and probably Liberty Street. It's that quadrant there. They want to designate the whole area as a heritage district. As a heritage district goes, all of the properties would have some encumbrance on them, either on title or in the designation itself.

This is where the problem began: someone else, some bureaucrat, so to speak, telling you what you can do with your property. Now, many people who live in the area admire the local community atmosphere, the streets, the streetscapes, the trees and other attributes of the community and its surroundings. It's not just the buildings, it's a whole neighbourhood; there's no question, and it always has been. Whether or not it gets this official designation and the pursuant encumbrances or restrictions is really the issue.

I think this would be important just for the record. Here's an article I'm reading. It's this month. I can't see the exact date. We'll say it's June 15, 2004: "Neighbourhood Heritage Drive Moves Forward." There was a vote taken, there were submissions made and votes taken afterwards, of course, and they decided to move on to phase 2 of the study, to determine the implications of having a heritage district.

I will commit to the record a number of names of persons who I think are very strong citizens, actually, and very committed to determining the appropriateness of

this heritage district. I'm going to cite here from Wednesday, June 2, 2004—I think it's the Orono Times. It says:

"Mayor Mutton said he would vote in favour of moving into phase 2, but he had to have absolute proof that the vast majority of the public are supportive of moving forward with the designation before he would ever approve moving forward with heritage designation" in this district. So there is Mayor John Mutton. That's his position, and I'm reading it. I'm not attributing to him, other than I'm reading it from the newspaper.

The next person, the advocate for the designation: "Bill Humber of the Old Bowmanville Neighbourhood Association said he was pleased with the outcome of the meeting. 'It is exactly what we have asked for,' he stated. 'This is not about heritage designation. It is about moving on to phase 2'" of the study of a heritage district.

But as in all things, as you move forward, you get deeper into the forest. One can hardly get out of the forest after one is in it. This is the deal.

1650

Now, this is quite interesting too. A contrarian position was expressed by Rick James. Rick James and the James family are very well known. The family had the family newspaper for 100 years. Johnny James was a former Liberal member. I was surprised he was Liberal. Back then they were probably more like us. But they were a very respected family—let's leave it at that—for over 100 years the publisher of the Canadian Statesman.

"A contrary opinion was expressed by Rick James, who said, 'We understand and respect council's decision to move forward but we are very concerned this pushes us one step closer to the actual designation of the neighbourhood. From the very beginning of this process, it has been made clear by the majority of homeowners that designation is not wanted, yet we keep creeping in that direction because of a small group of advocates who don't seem to respect the wishes or rights of their neighbours.'"

So you can see how controversial—you move from what I would call the highly objective review until it involves you. That's the issue here. It is a property rights issue. I think that's why governments, advisedly so, have moved slowly in trying to find an appropriate solution.

Bill 60 sets out a few things that give municipalities new powers to prevent demolition of heritage sites: new provincial powers to identify and designate heritage sites and prevent demolition; clear standards and guidelines for provincially owned heritage properties; improvements to municipal designation processes; clear, transparent processes. It strengthens and protects for heritage conservation districts. Now, that's kind of new. There are heritage districts, no question; it's a process. It increases provincial protection for significant marine heritage sites, as Mr Barrett said earlier. It enhances provisions for conserving archaeological resources, and it streamlines agency provisions on the Ontario Heritage Foundation and the Conservation Review Board.

It's in these new powers where there is some problem. As we read in the newspaper yesterday, Maple Leaf

Gardens became a grocery store last night—Loblaws—and the largest liquor store in Ontario, I think.

Interjection.

Mr O'Toole: Well, the Liberal government is in charge, and I have no problem with that. It was the Toronto council; let's be clear about it. But I'm sure they're working in consultation with the provincial board, the Ontario Heritage Foundation, as well as trying to find ways to make this a very valuable commercial property. Here's where the property rights issue comes into it. Let's say I own Maple Leaf Gardens and that you are telling me what I could do with that property. I have no problem, provided you're going to give me compensation. If you think it's worth preserving, pony up.

Interjection.

Mr O'Toole: Well, there are shareholders, and some of the shareholders of Maple Leaf Enterprises are the teachers' pension fund, the public sector pension fund. They invest in these things. You don't want the government to just come in and take away all your rights. But I'm pleased to report that they must have found a solution, because the facade of the Maple Leaf Gardens will be preserved.

It's clear that through working co-operatively without ramming it through, while listening to the people, you can find solutions. My understanding and my commitment would be that we need to have more consultation on Bill 60. I would leave it at that, that I'm for more consultation, getting it right, and at the same time being on the record that I am a supporter of preserving heritage in this province, not just cultural heritage.

In the dying few moments here, I think of Peterborough where I grew up. I grew up in a rural district, Otonabee township, a great place right on the Otonabee River. This year, for instance, is the 100th anniversary of the Peterborough lift lock. It's a marvellous engineering feat. It's 100 years old and stands and serves the people today. There are those who would have said it's not modern enough, but it's the largest hydraulic lift lock in the world. I was fortunate to have a cottage in the area. Unfortunately, we sold it a couple of years ago before the market actually would have kicked it up a bit, but hey, that's—

Interjection.

Mr O'Toole: It is in that vein.

I can think of Peterborough and I think of Lakefield and the whole Trent-Severn Waterway system.

My mother-in-law, Madge Hall, is a wonderful lady. She doesn't think much of Peter Adams.

Interjection.

Mr O'Toole: Oh, no, she wouldn't vote for him if he came and brought her lunch. She'd give him lunch.

Madge, I know, would be happy to know that I remember Lakefield is an important part in the history and heritage, with Catharine Parr Traill, Trent University. Madge would be proud. She'd support this bill.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Kormos: I don't know Madge Hall, but I know other folks like her, and you can bet your boots Madge

Hall is not pleased at all with seeing the privatization of health care by the Liberals here at Queen's Park. You can bet your boots that Madge Hall is as mad as anybody can get when she's told that she—

The Deputy Speaker: I think you should be talking about the speeches that were given, in your two minutes.

Mr Kormos: Indeed I am, Speaker. It was the speech by the member for Durham that I'm responding to. He's the one who talked about Madge Hall, and you see, that's the problem now. I've got to do questions and comments on his speech.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: I didn't hear those words in his speech, so I'd prefer that you keep your comments to that.

Mr Kormos: Madge Hall has a fascination, I'm sure, with heritage buildings and the maintenance of heritage buildings. And Madge Hall, a good woman, while she advocates the maintenance of heritage buildings and would implore this government to protect heritage buildings, I'm sure she decries this government's attack on seniors as it privatizes health care. I'm sure that as Madge Hall wants to see strong legislation protecting heritage in communities, whether it's hers or anywhere else in this province, I'm sure she decries the tough new taxes imposed by Liberals upon herself and others like her. I tell you, Madge Hall, while advocating for the preservation of heritage places, has no time for a government that would privatize health care and break every promise that it made in the course of an election campaign; why, would indeed say everything it had to to get elected, but then break every promise it made in a New York minute.

Hon David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): I want to congratulate the member from Durham on his comments, and the member from Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant as well. Certainly, I want to congratulate the member from Durham on the passage of his private member's bill, Irish Heritage Day, that he did talk about. Congratulations, sir. That's wonderful.

It's very interesting. Bill 60 is supported by municipalities across this province. They were here on its introduction. Many municipalities in fact have applied to this Legislature through private bills to gain these types of abilities to protect heritage properties across this province. This bill has the support, I think, of legislators from every political party.

I think the question is not only to the member from Durham but to the last speaker, from Niagara Centre: Why is the NDP blocking passage of Bill 60, which could see municipalities get the kind of protection they need for the heritage properties that exist in this province?

In fact, we are seeing New Democrats block Bill 56, family medical leave. It has been the heritage of this place that when we have non-contentious pieces of legislation, legislation that would give family members the ability to care for dying loved ones and give them job protection, to be able to give protection to critical heritage properties like in Bill 60—but we see, unfortunately,

Mr Kormos, the member for Niagara Centre, and Mr Hampton block passage of this much-needed legislation, whether it's Bill 56 or Bill 60.

I hope the member from Durham is going to want to speak about this bill and about why a third party would want to block legislation. Ironically enough, the only reason that members of the third party have given for the stand they've taken is because they are looking for additional coin. They're looking for additional dollars above and beyond the \$1.8 million they've gained quite recently as a result of the by-election in Hamilton East. Shame on them.

1700

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I should say that I do support this bill. I sometimes say it reluctantly, because whenever you support anything around here, with Liberals in particular, they will plaster your name on every billboard in any election so they can take advantage of the fact that even a New Democrat supports this bill or that bill. So you're very careful, right? We are careful here because it has been abused by Liberals before, so you carefully say here that you reluctantly support this bill.

Interjection: It has not been abused.

Mr Marchese: It has been, against my colleague Michael Prue. Let me show it to the folks. This is my friend Michael Prue, used in a by-election in Hamilton against him and against us as New Democrats. This is the danger. If this happens on a regular basis, then New Democrats say, "Hmm. I'm not sure we're ever going to support another bill again."

Some of you might say, "It's a by-election," but we say that in whatever context you use it, whether a regular election or a by-election, it was wrong, a mistake, because then you don't get the co-operation of the opposition parties.

So I say to you, Minister, you've got to be careful. Around here, we negotiate. What gets passed in this Legislature is a matter of negotiation. It didn't work, and obviously the government did not want to make it happen, so we hope the government will take some responsibility for that.

Ms Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek): I'm very pleased to speak for Bill 60, because I am the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Culture. Just for a refreshing change, so that the people at home know exactly what it is we're talking about, I'd like to just go over the changes we are proposing in this legislation, which I know is being supported by all parties. So let's take a look.

We have new municipal powers to prevent demolition of heritage sites, new provincial powers to identify and designate heritage sites of provincial significance and prevent their demolition, clear standards and guidelines for provincially owned heritage property, improvements to the municipal designation process, strengthened protection for heritage conservation districts, increased provincial protection for significant marine heritage sites, enhanced provisions to conserve archaeological resources,

and updated agency provisions for the Ontario Heritage Foundation and Conservation Review Board.

These are long-overdue changes to this act. For many, many years we've watched around the province as buildings and sites have been destroyed, with absolutely nothing standing in the way between them and the wrecking ball. It's been a tremendous tragedy, because once those properties are destroyed you can never bring them back. They're gone.

So this is a wonderful piece of legislation. We're very proud of it. We are pleased that it has been given support from virtually everybody in this House, and we're going to be moving forward with it.

I was at a couple of conferences with some heritage conservancy groups and they were very, very pleased with this. Time and time again, it's been made very clear that if you are going to preserve anything, you have to have strong legislation to do so. That is what we are bringing in. We are bringing in strong legislation to protect the heritage of this province, which is valuable and irreplaceable.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant has two minutes to reply.

Mr Barrett: The member from Durham made mention of property rights. I think it's very important to stress that those of us present who have ridings that front on the Great Lakes always remember that that land under the water is crown land, Ontario government land, if you will.

When I look at a map of my particular riding, essentially half of it is underwater. My riding fronts on the border with Erie, Pennsylvania. If you're the middle of the lake, it fronts on New York state, Erie and the state of Ohio.

I think it's very important, as this legislation moves forward—and I'm referring specifically to the marine heritage component—that we take a big-picture view of the lakes—not to forget about the rivers in the province of Ontario—look at our neighbours on the other side of the waters and make sure that our marine heritage legislation is in keeping with the legislation of those neighbouring states.

Property rights are a factor. It's very important to realize that those wrecks on crown land under the water are the property of the province of Ontario. For that reason I feel there is a very strong case to prevent the pirates, if you will, from stripping these wrecks.

There was a court case very recently with the steamship Atlantic. Again, the province of Ontario went head to head with Port Dover diver Mike Fletcher. In that case, the court ruled that all shipwrecks and their associated artifacts located on Ontario's crown land are the property of the province. We have that responsibility, the responsibility on our parliamentary assistant, to look after the Hamilton, the Scourge, and to keep the Haida floating, for that matter.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Marchese: I want to repeat what I said just a couple of minutes ago, that I personally support this bill. I think it's a good bill.

I say it reluctantly because, again, it has happened in the past where one of our members said something in agreement by way of a bill that was passed in this place, and then it was used against him in a Hamilton by-election. I say, if this were to become a regular habit, most of us here would be, and would become, very wary of saying that we support bills by this government.

Mr Shafiq Qaadri (Etobicoke North): Very wary.

Mr Marchese: Very wary.

Mr Qaadri: Very wary; interesting phrasing.

Mr Marchese: We would be very wary.

I say this because it's important to remind Liberal members that when they use it in inappropriate ways, as has been witnessed, it makes a whole lot of people nervous. This is a good bill that can be supported, and that I suspect will be supported, by most New Democrats when the time comes.

I want to speak to some of the elements in the bill that are good, and I want to speak to some of the other elements that I think could be strengthened. I want to thank, not so much the government, although they've done the right thing, but those who are in the heritage field, for having pressed the previous Conservative government for years to pass this type of legislation. They have been the very ones who have pressed the Liberal government to pass the legislation, with amendments that I believe have strengthened the Ontario Heritage Act in ways that are good for people in Ontario.

People don't realize that the way bills are introduced in this place has a lot to do with pressure that is put upon government and put upon individual members of the government in order for government to even consider any legislation. Legislation doesn't happen in this place willy-nilly, or at the will of individual ministers, or at the will of Premiers. Sometimes it does. If Premiers want to move certain things, they happen, and they happen quickly. This is true.

It isn't always true of individual ministers. Some ministers may have strong feelings about some things, but it doesn't mean those bills get introduced and/or passed in this place. The way bills get introduced has a lot to do with the pressure the public puts, not just on the individual minister or on the individual member, but on the government as a whole before they even consider it.

1710

So I thank all those who have worked in the heritage field over the last 20 years, because it is the efforts you have made individually and collectively that forced the previous government, in its last dying days, to introduce an act, and as far as this Liberal government is concerned, to introduce an amendment act that makes that bill so much better.

I want to thank people like Catherine Nasmith, the past chair of Heritage Toronto. She has been working in this field and has had an interest in heritage for a long time. Individuals like Catherine Nasmith have made a difference.

I congratulate the Doors Open folk who created this a couple of years ago, and have created a desire and an

interest in maintaining our heritage, in preserving it and in seeing it. Without their efforts, there would be fewer people out there demanding an Ontario Heritage Act, and in this case an amendment act that would strengthen Ontario's culture, Ontario's heritage. Doors Open was, in my view, one of those initiatives that has got a whole lot of people from all over Ontario to see its heritage.

So many people have so little knowledge of what we own, of what we have, of what we've had, and of what we've lost. That's why I commend individuals who commit so much of their time to understanding and preserving our heritage. I've always been a strong believer in our tangible heritage. I've always believed that we needed people who think the same way, because so much of our physical structures, our physical heritage has been lost in Ontario, in Canada. So much we have given away to developers.

I think, when I go to Italy, France, Germany or anywhere in Europe, and maybe Greece, when you travel to some of these countries, what it is that I admire and what millions of tourists admire when they go to places like Florence or Venice or Rome and any of the surrounding regions is the physical heritage that has been so beautifully preserved.

Mr Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): Sienna.

Mr Marchese: Lorenzo loves Sienna. I do too, by the way. Beautiful little city. That is why indeed people go there rather than saying, "Let's go to some Ontario little city and see what we've got." We haven't preserved our heritage. We've simply lost so much.

Interjection: Stratford.

Mr Marchese: Stratford is a beautiful place. So many of our cities are beautiful, and by the grace of, not so much God but the energy and effort made by so many city councillors and citizens who wanted to preserve their heritage, we've maintained a lot of the buildings that otherwise would have been lost.

People go to Europe because they want to see what's old, what has been there for hundreds of years, what still remains, some of it intact and some of it, yes, partly in ruins, but they still hold on to it. That's why I love to go. I adore Italy, and that's why whenever I have an opportunity to travel, I take it. It's not often, but I love what Italy has to offer, and it is part of that heritage.

What this bill gives us that is a critical part of why I support it is that, for the very first time, municipalities will be able to refuse a demolition application by an owner of a heritage property designated under the heritage act. This was a power that we wanted and sought for a long time. This is the power that is in this amendment act that was not there in the act the Tories introduced in their last, dying days. Cities needed this power. Without the ability of a city council to say to someone, "You cannot destroy, you cannot demolish that building," we were powerless. Communities were powerless, all those dedicated to their heritage or their communities were powerless. Individual councillors had no say. It didn't matter what appeal you made to the OMB or anyone,

minister or otherwise, you had no power. This corrects a deficiency of the old act, without which we wouldn't have the necessary powers to preserve our heritage.

Anthony Tung, who New Democrats brought here a couple of years ago from New York City, a preservation commissioner, said this was the most important thing the province could do to protect heritage buildings. We have known this for quite some time. We didn't necessarily need Anthony Tung to tell us, but it was important to have his voice, because New Yorkers have done a great deal to preserve their heritage. In fact, they destroyed the Pennsylvania Station in 1963. It was demolished. In spite of the uproar and in spite of opposition, it was demolished. Evidently, it was a beautiful station, with much to admire. But that was the catalyst, evidently, that turned things around for those who wanted to preserve the heritage of their communities, to the extent that so much changed across the United States by way of giving powers not just to the states as states, but to the cities, in order to preserve heritage.

So this initiative, this addition, is one of the most important things that I, as a New Democrat, support. Imagine how proud and happy those individuals, who have been working to bring an Ontario Heritage Act that they could be proud of, are today that there is a bill that speaks to what they have been trying to do for so many years. So it's a good day. It's a good feeling. It's something that, yes, we can be proud of. The province will be able to designate properties and refuse demolition of properties. That's a good thing. Not only are they giving municipalities the power to prevent demolitions, but the province maintains its power to do so, as well. That too is good thing.

We have the Concourse Building. I remember going there a year and a half ago. This is a beautiful art deco building in the Toronto financial district, not yet demolished. The province could intervene in trying to preserve this wonderful art deco structure. I am not sure whether the province will use its own power to prevent its demolition, but if you wanted to act and wanted to show leadership and wanted to show how Bill 60, the new Ontario Heritage Amendment Act, actually works, this is the place that the Minister of Culture could start. Use your power to say the Concourse Building will not be torn down. We will wait and see. My suspicion is that the government will say, "A decision has already been made. Why interfere with that? Why get ourselves into trouble with that? We would be seen to be doing something retroactively."

God knows you did that with the private school tax credit. One wonders whether you'll be able to retroactively use this power you now have to change the decision that has been made, which was in my view a mistake, and preserve a beautiful art deco structure.

1720

We'll wait and see. You now have the power. It is a good power. We'll wait and see whether we'll be able to preserve the interior of Maple Leaf Gardens, a structure that a lot of people love, that people have been to and that

a lot of people want to preserve. Let's see how the city and the province use their power to stop the gutting of that historic heritage building. The minister will be able to issue a stop order to prevent demolition if she, in this case, believes properties have heritage value—good powers, important powers, powers that were absent in the past in the act that would give us the ability, those of us who are interested in holding on to our heritage, to be able to say no to the destruction of our buildings.

Municipalities have the right to impose specific property standards on owners of designated heritage properties. This is yet another good power that municipalities have been given, because they are the ones that have the knowledge and expertise of their own communities, of their own histories. I personally believe that it's good for municipalities to have such a power and to be able to impose standards on the owners of designated heritage properties.

We hope it will not unduly restrict municipalities in terms of what they can and cannot preserve, or what they can and cannot destroy. Municipalities hopefully will be able to have the power to decide on what is considered a heritage site or property to preserve—again, a good power to include, but hopefully it will not be a power that will unduly restrict what municipalities can do.

We hope you will give cities the power to find the balance they think they would need. Municipalities can create study areas to prevent alterations and demolitions for up to one year while a municipality and community studies whether to make the areas a permanent heritage conservation district. We think it's a good thing. I believe it's a good thing. We heard the member from Durham speak against this idea, but I believe it's a good idea.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: John, you don't have to do a point of order. I'll repeat it for you. Municipalities can create study areas to prevent alterations and demolitions for up to one year. This gives municipalities and communities the time to study whether or not the area should be considered a permanent heritage district.

I think this is good. Why not give the city, a municipality, the power to be able to do that? There are districts that we might want to protect as a district. Given what I said previously in terms of providing standards for owners of designated heritage sites, why not do that so we are able to decide what kinds of things can be done in those areas, how you want to modify the particular building or area, what kinds of colours you want, what kinds of brick you might want or not want, or what design you might want or not want? This is a good thing.

There are districts that should be preserved. There are areas and districts in Europe, in fact whole cities, that you can't touch; you need a permit to make any slight alteration on anything. Some people might say, "This is a bit too much. It might slow things down a whole lot. You might not be able to do what you want, and that's an infringement on those individuals' rights," but you're preserving culture. You're preserving what we are—what you are—as a people. It's not an undue hardship to

impose on a district or on those properties to be able to say, "This is what you can or can't do." Again, I think it's a good thing.

There are many other things the bill does that I think are very helpful. Where an owner of a designated property applies to have the designation removed, the public will now be entitled to notice and have an opportunity to comment. Previously this was not the case. We want to be able to give the power to a community, given notice, to come before the politicians and say, "We agree or disagree." Why would you take that power away? Why wouldn't you give the power to the people to have their say? This is a good thing.

Protection of marine archaeological sites is being strengthened, as is licensing of archaeological personnel. The member for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant spoke at length about this. This again is a good thing. We've had an opportunity to debate this in committee for a long time, and again, this is a good thing.

Areas where I think we need to do a little more work: The owner of a designated property will have a right of appeal to the Ontario Municipal Board in the case of either a municipal or provincial refusal of a demolition permit. We have no quarrel with that. This is perfectly reasonable. Where we say we need some change is in the following: It should be changed to allow third parties to appeal the consent of a municipality to a demolition to the board as well, which does not appear to be allowed under the current wording. So we agree that the owner of a designated property should have a right of appeal to the Ontario Municipal Board in the case of a municipal government or the provincial government saying no to a demolition permit, but we believe third parties should be able to have the power to appeal the consent of a municipality to a demolition. That's not an unreasonable thing to do or to ask for.

Why couldn't a third party have the power to appeal; why wouldn't you allow that? That's the question I ask the minister and this government. This is not something that I think is an unreasonable request to make. This is something the government will have time to reflect on. Therefore I hope, having raised it here, you will consider it and, when we get it to committee hearings, others will join me in suggesting or demanding that that request be heard and implemented by this government.

Another good thing I forgot to mention—it's not a problem but it is a good thing—is that members of the Conservation Review Board, which reviews designation decisions, will be able to sit on the Ontario Municipal Board for hearings into demolitions. This is a good thing. These people have expertise and knowledge. The fact that they will be able to sit on the Ontario Municipal Board gives us a voice. It gives those who care about heritage a voice so that when they get to those OMB hearings, we will be able to have experts who will help to guide some or many of the members of the Ontario Municipal Board who may not have sympathies for heritage or knowledge of heritage. This addition to the Ontario Heritage Amendment Act is a good thing.

1730

We think and suggest and hope that the government may want to consider some training for Ontario Municipal Board members, because it is my suspicion that we've had very few people on this board who have sympathy for or knowledge of heritage: heritage buildings or heritage history in general. I make this sweeping generalization, but I suspect my suspicions are correct, something on which I suspect the government and the minister might agree with me, and if she does, this is one area that we could help the Ontario Municipal Board with. We might be able to do it by making sure that new appointments to the Ontario Municipal Board will have the expertise, knowledge of, and sympathy for and with heritage. If that's the case, we might not have to do too much training of current Ontario Municipal Board members. But that's something we should reflect on.

I just got a little note here, minister of infrastructure, that Portugal won the game against England. It was a wonderful game. I couldn't see it, having had to be here on duty and having to speak to this particular bill.

Hon Mr Caplan: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I rejoice for all Portuguese Ontarians, and I must tell you that Ricardo himself saved the last goal and scored on penalty kicks. I know that my friend opposite would want to know this critical information.

The Deputy Speaker: That's not a point of order, but it is interesting. Thank you.

Mr Marchese: I want to congratulate Portugal. I share the joy with many of my constituents who happen to be of Portuguese extraction. In fact, about 25% of my riding is of Portuguese origin, so imagine the horns tonight on College and Dundas, and the parades from one end of Bathurst to the other. It's going to be exciting. My sympathies to England and the English fans. They were a good team. I suspect there aren't a lot of people who enjoy soccer in this place, but I'm a big fan, so it was a big disappointment to have to be here on duty—and I enjoy being here—and not having the opportunity to see that game. Nevertheless—

Ms Mossop: And we enjoy being here with you.

Mr Marchese: I'm so happy to hear that.

There is another point I wanted to make in relation to what is good about the bill. You see, when you skip around, you miss a couple of things. But there is a fine of up to one million bucks for demolitions under the act, and that's an appropriate fine. I think if it were any less, it would probably be a problem. A \$1-million fine on anyone who demolishes a building they shouldn't is a good deterrent for those who think it's OK to demolish heritage buildings. So that is a good thing.

I wanted to suggest that there is very little in the bill that encourages people who own heritage buildings to maintain them. I think the minister and this government should spend at least a couple of minutes to reflect on this. Unless we find a way to give incentives to owners of heritage buildings to preserve them, it's going to be an incredible burden that we impose on them. If maintaining and preserving a heritage building is a public good, as I

believe it is, if it is in the public interest to preserve and maintain our heritage buildings, then I believe we have to properly compensate; we have to find incentives for people to be able to keep those buildings.

It's not a cheap enterprise here. Preserving heritage buildings is a very costly business. Having to make renovations in this building, which is a heritage building, has been very costly. It was built in 1904—well, it burned down once or twice—and it wasn't built according to the codes of 2003. As a result, every change we make in this building is costly, and it's never perfect—

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: Sorry, Brad? Couldn't hear you. So whatever change you make is expensive.

Because I'm supporting this bill, I'm looking forward to support, rather than—I don't know—chiding remarks. Help me out. I'm supporting your bill. It appears as if sometimes I get these funny remarks about certain things. If you like this bill, and I like it, you've got to help me out, right? So when I make some suggestions, you've got to say, "Hmm, that's a good idea. We're going to consider it. Gee, we never thought of that," something like that, as a way of encouraging someone like me in the opposition to be supportive of you, right?

Right, John? Hey, Brad, did you see Ed Broadbent's little rap? Did you see it? Did you like it? You should do one, because I saw you doing my imitation. That's good, Brad. Could we get the cameras on Brad Duguid over there? That's good, Brad. You should do your own little video.

I like it when you imitate me, I really do, but I want you to support my suggestions. If you don't, it's going to be painful. If you don't support our suggestions, I don't know whether I can support yours, right? That's the way it works. That's negotiation. That's how we negotiate and compromise, right? The Minister of Public Infrastructure earlier on said, "Ah, the New Democrats are stalling." We said, "Sorry, this is negotiation." We negotiate in this place, right, Carol?

Ms Mossop: Jennifer.

Mr Marchese: Jennifer. We've got to negotiate. That's what this place is about.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: No, I like to go all over the place. I want the cameras to move with me so they can see the other members. That's the way it works. There's nobody in the right.

So Liberals, work with me a little bit. The fines are good. The \$1-million fines for demolition are good; no problem with that.

Mr Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): We've had some great houses demolished in Mississauga.

Mr Marchese: He wants me to talk about Mississauga. You've got to stand up. I think you guys are next in line. I want to hear you do the 20 minutes, Bob Delaney from Mississauga West. I want Bob Delaney from Mississauga West to talk about the great culture you've got in Mississauga: what you may have lost and what you want to preserve. I'm looking forward to your

two minutes and your 20 minutes to talk about your love of heritage. He's not in his seat and he's going to get there soon to be able to do that; don't you worry.

What incentives does this bill give for people to be able to preserve their buildings? Does any Liberal know? What incentives? I don't hear anything. That goes to show you that they don't know. There are no incentives in your bill.

Hon Mr Caplan: Intrinsic value.

Mr Marchese: Yeah, David: intrinsic value; intangible heritage. No, no, you've got to offer some incentives. You haven't thought about that, or maybe you did and maybe you thought, "Well, we have no money." But you can't say to people—

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: Lorenzo, hold on. You can't say to people, "Preserve the buildings, but we've got no money for you. Yes, you're doing this for the public good, for the public interest, but we have no money for you. Yes, we're going to let the city decide on how they can help you, but they have no money for you." Unless the province kicks in some money, we've got a problemo.

I was pointing out that preserving heritage buildings is a very expensive enterprise. While it is good economically for those who want to restore old buildings and to maintain our heritage buildings—while that creates spin-off jobs, and while that is part of a public good—unless those individuals who own those buildings are given some support, they might not have the money to be able to preserve those buildings, and then what do we do? Then what do you do?

That's why New Democrats have proposed a fund for dynamic downtowns, which would have provided \$300 million per year for, among other things, municipalities to make available substantial grants or property tax breaks for owners of designated heritage property. It's what you've got to think about, it's what you've got to do.

1740

Minister of infrastructure, you've got to help me out. This is a bill you like. This is a bill—

Hon Mr Caplan: Have you got a pothole?

Mr Marchese: No, not potholes. This is a bill you like, that you want passed. Before we pass this, there have got to be a couple of changes. I'm not being unreasonable in the suggestions I'm making to make this bill a little more supportive.

There's another matter I wanted to bring to your attention, Minister of Infrastructure, because you seem to be here directing traffic today. The minister should amend the transition provisions in the bill to ensure there isn't a frenzy of demolition just before it receives royal assent. All buildings that are not in the process of physical demolition should be subject to the new rules, not after royal assent, as the bill says, but after the date of introduction of the bill. The point about this is that those who want to demolish heritage buildings can do so now. Those who know that this bill has been introduced in this place will figure out, sooner or later, that it's a question

of time until this bill is implemented. It may not receive royal assent as quickly as some would like—

Hon Mr Caplan: It could today.

Mr Marchese: It may not, for a variety of reasons that are disputable. But I say to you that, when the time comes, we are ready, as an assembly, to pass this bill. What you've got to do is make sure you adjust for transition provisions to make sure there isn't a frenzy of demolition. And you know, Minister of Infrastructure, that there will be.

Hon Mr Caplan: Pass it today.

Mr Marchese: No, we can't pass it today.

Interjections.

Mr Marchese: We can't pass the bill today.

Mr O'Toole: You're alone. Do it. Stand up for democracy.

Mr Marchese: We can't do it. We operate in this place on the basis of arriving at some agreement entre nous, and that requires the agreement of three political parties. We obviously were not able to get that agreement from the government. The government, of course, will stand up and say, "Well, blame the NDP," which is what every government does. The Conservative government did it before the Liberals, and the Liberals are doing it now. What they're saying is, if this bill doesn't get passed today, the only ones you can blame are the NDP. You can believe that, those of you who are watching, all you want; or you will, or might, understand the political process and that there are negotiations on a regular basis before the end of a session, and those negotiations obviously did not go very well.

Would you think, those of you who follow this political channel, that an opposition party would simply be here and say yes to everything the government wants on the basis that they are good and the rest are bad, on the basis that every bill they pass is good and whatever the opposition has to say is bad? Would you think we would do that? No. It would be simplistic. It would be naïve. It would be puerile. It would be silly, right?

Negotiations haven't been going very well, and there are reasons for that. There are reasons for that. Part of the problem we've had are the broken promises of the Liberal Party.

Interjections.

Mr Marchese: Well, it's true. Part of the problem we've been having for the last month are the broken promises. McGuinty said, "We won't introduce a health tax because it would be wrong. The Tories introduced it." McGuinty said, "We wouldn't do it," and then he does it. You see, that got you into a whole lot of problems.

I can understand why you would want to try to introduce so many bills that you think people would like out there in order to overshadow or subsume so much of what you've done that is bad. I understand your efforts to want to do that. Why would we oblige your political agenda? Sorry. Would I want to make it easy for you to be able to go out there and say, "Look at all the great things," so that you can forget all the bad things? No; it's

not my job, certainly. It's your job to try to do that. It's not my job.

Mr Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe): I have a question, Mr Marchese: What does the NDP want?

Mr Marchese: What the NDP wants? We don't negotiate here on the floor, please. Khalil, what's the matter with you? You don't negotiate on the floor. You do it in the privacy of various rooms. You discuss it and then you try to be as reasonable as you can. At the end of the day, the government said no to whatever negotiations were going on. God bless. You've got the wheels. You're in charge. You've got the power.

I believe that we need several things, as I said. First of all, at the OMB, we need retraining of many of those members because I don't believe they're well qualified to deal with these issues. We need to deal with the fact that there are no incentives in this bill to help those individuals who own properties and want to maintain them. We believe that the minister should amend the transition provisions in the bill to ensure there isn't a frenzy of demolition just before it receives royal assent. That's something that I think the government and the minister need to review as they send it to committee hearings.

Is it possible this government doesn't want to send this bill to committee hearings? My suspicion is that you would want to make sure the public gets one last crack at speaking to this bill. This is a good thing for you. The public supports the bill, generally speaking. You would want to hear whether or not there is any opposition to what you have introduced by way of amendments, and you would want to hear from those individuals who want to speak to other amendments that they think should be introduced, which I don't believe, based on what I've presented here, are difficult to bring forward. They may have other things they want to talk about; I don't know. But I believe there should be hearings, and I want to make sure that happens.

If we were to pass it today—second and third readings—it wouldn't work. If we did that, then the public wouldn't be able to have its say, and it certainly wouldn't be participatory, would it?

Mr Berardinetti: After second reading, it goes to committee.

Mr Marchese: We're not going to do that today. We could have done that today, but it just didn't work out.

What can I say about this bill, generally speaking, except that it's timely? It is important to give people who fought for preservation of our heritage something they could hold on to. We've been dealing with this for 20 years—imagine, 20 years. People have been fighting all sorts of governments, and it started in my time, in fact when I was Minister of Culture in 1991, when people started to talk about the need to introduce a new heritage act, which hadn't been changed for decades. We started those debates in late 1990, 1991, and we involved many different ministries, because heritage isn't something that is exclusive to the Ministry of Culture but to many ministries. It took a long time. They lobbied us, and we failed to introduce it in 1994-95, when we could have,

and that is a problem I take some responsibility for, because I believe we could have introduced it then.

Yes, there's always competition in this Legislative Assembly about which bills come before this place to be debated. Indeed, in my time in government, many ministers and many different people were competing over which bills should be introduced. We had Tories and Liberals obstructing every move we made. So unhappy were they to have an NDP government that they wouldn't let up with every obstructionist initiative they could think of. So impossible was it to introduce any bill that we needed to decide which bills were to be introduced on the basis of what we thought was critical or important to people at that time. Obviously, heritage didn't make it—and rarely makes it. And that's the point.

People in the heritage community work day in and day out to defend and protect something they believe strongly in. They don't know how to lobby governments. They've learned to lobby, but in the beginning it was very hard. Lobbying consisted of making an effort to visit the minister and hope that in convincing the minister, they would be able to move the initiative along. It wasn't so simple. It's not so simple. This is why I say to people who are interested in convincing government or ministers about any initiative, the way to do it isn't just to lobby the minister; you've got to lobby every member of this House, of this Legislative Assembly. You've got to lobby every member in every constituency office, and you do that by sending those who are interested over and over again to those offices until the members of provincial government listen to what you have to say.

1750

Simply writing a letter is not sufficient. Simply writing a letter and hoping for a response is not sufficient. Writing a letter to the minister that doesn't say "Private and confidential" will never reach the minister. In fact, it will reach the minister, but by that time they'll be out of office. So if you want to connect to the minister, write on the letter "Private and confidential," because if you do that, nobody will be able to be open that envelope except the minister.

This is important. Some of you who haven't been lucky to be in cabinet don't know some of those little tricks.

Interjections.

Mr Marchese: This is what you learn. You learn that if you want to reach the minister, you've got to put "Private and confidential"; otherwise, the civil servants open that envelope and then it takes a whole year or two, by the time it goes through the echelons of power, and by the time it reaches the minister, they're gone. It's a dead issue. You understand what I'm saying? It's important.

You've got to lobby, day in and day out. You've got to go to the members and you've got to make yourself a headache to the member. If you simply go to the member and say, "I really believe this particular issue is important," and the member says, "Oh, yeah, I agree with you," and you go back home thinking, "My job is done," don't believe that. Most MPPs are going to say, "Of course I

agree with you." Generally speaking, even if they disagree with you, they'll probably say, "I agree with you," just to get you out the door.

Mr Kormos: Look what the Liberals said before the election.

Mr Marchese: Yeah, look what the Liberals said prior to the election and you'll understand why you have to be wary of what it is the politicians tell you. We told them before the election there were certain things you couldn't do. You can't promise \$7 billion of new services, no new taxes, deal with the deficit and balance the budget, like it's that simple. You can't do that. It takes time. It takes a civil society, actively engaged, to make every member of this place accountable.

When you go to that political office, every minister is available in their constituency office on Fridays to meet with you. And if they're not available to meet with you on Fridays, they don't want to meet with you. That's just the way it works. They're always busy.

Interjection: They are.

Mr Marchese: Look, with all due respect, they are, but they ought never to be that busy that they can't find the time on a Friday morning or a Friday afternoon, when we're not sitting in this place, to meet with you. So it is possible that some ministers are finding the time to meet with you. All I'm telling you is, I'm giving you the tricks of the trade, right? When a minister says, "I'm too busy," if he's too busy to see you, he doesn't need your vote or doesn't want it. So go to the constituency office, meet with the staff and say you want to meet with the minister and/or the member. If the member is too busy to see you, they don't want your vote or they don't need your vote. That's just the way it is. Again, if you go individually to that office and only one person in that constituency office comes to say to you, "I want this bill or that bill," it's not enough. You need a movement, right? You need a movement of people.

That's what Jennifer and the heritage community have done. That's what they did. The heritage community did exactly that, making themselves heard everywhere, in every office across Ontario. I want to thank so much so many of those who influenced the previous government and this government—people like Jane Jacobs. An active citizen like Jane Jacobs you have never, ever met. She has helped to mobilize so many people around not only issues of cities, but issues of heritage as well. And we need people like Jane Jacobs and Catherine Naismith to mobilize others to take an interest and to bring them to every constituency office across Ontario.

I congratulate people like Margie Zeidler, who is the owner of 401 Richmond, in my riding. Some of you who are close to the city will be familiar with this building. It is a wonderful heritage building that has been preserved by Margie Zeidler, and I congratulate her, because there aren't too many people like that who take a project like this on and say, "We can fix this building up and we can bring a variety of different people—small business people, cultural community types, art galleries." There is an array of people in that building that makes it indeed

vibrant, so vibrant that it has become a model for so many other people to imitate. That's what we need. We need individuals like that. And we can never thank them enough for doing what they do.

So again, they lobby, and we have been forced to listen. It has taken literally 20 years to finally get to this place where we are dealing with a bill that—I was going to say, “with all due respect,” but with a bill that is good, with some changes that I propose can be made, that I believe will make it better, but it is essentially a bill that I think should be supported.

Again, we do want this bill to be debated, based on the suggestions that we are making. We want those who are watching this parliamentary channel to know what we have to say. We want heritage people to know that changes can be made, changes can still be made that will make this bill even better, that we shouldn't take less, that we don't have to rush it to be able to say, “Let's take this and move on, because you never know what might happen.” More changes can be made that will make this bill better. Why would I prevent that from happening? Why would I hasten the decision-making process on this bill just because the Liberals say, “Well, I want it today”? I wouldn't do that. I want to have the debate. I want the heritage community to come. I want them to come and make other suggestions, and when the right time comes, we will support the bill. We will. But we want to hear from the heritage community what it is they have to say.

Now, Speaker, I've got eight more minutes. Please indicate when it is that you think I should be stopping.

The Deputy Speaker: Now is a good time. Thank you.

ROYAL ASSENT SANCTION ROYALE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): I beg to inform the House that in the name of Her Majesty the Queen, His Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been pleased to give assent to certain bills in his office.

Deputy Clerk (Ms Deborah Deller): The following are the titles of the bills to which His Honour has assented:

Bill 27, An Act to establish a greenbelt study area and to amend the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act,

2001 / Projet de loi 27, Loi établissant une zone d'étude de la ceinture de verdure et modifiant la Loi de 2001 sur la conservation de la moraine d'Oak Ridges.

Bill 33, An Act proclaiming Irish Heritage Day / Projet de loi 33, Loi proclamant le Jour du patrimoine irlandais.

Bill 40, An Act to amend the Insurance Act to protect emergency service providers from rate increases to their personal contracts of automobile insurance / Projet de loi 40, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les assurances visant à protéger les fournisseurs de services d'urgence contre l'augmentation des taux dans leurs contrats d'assurance-automobile personnels.

Bill 43, An Act to amend the Liquor Licence Act by requiring signage cautioning pregnant women that the consumption of alcohol while pregnant is the cause of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder / Projet de loi 43, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les permis d'alcool en exigeant que soient placées des affiches avertissant les femmes enceintes que la consommation d'alcool pendant la grossesse occasionne l'ensemble des troubles causés par l'alcoolisation fœtale.

Bill 104, An Act to amend the Health Insurance Act and the Ministry of Health Appeal and Review Boards Act, 1998 / Projet de loi 104, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'assurance-santé et la Loi de 1998 sur les commissions d'appel et de révision du ministère de la Santé.

Bill 114, An Act to amend the Election Finances Act / Projet de loi 114, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le financement des élections.

Bill Pr2, An Act respecting the Malton Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Bill Pr3, An Act respecting the Association of Registered Graphic Designers of Ontario.

Bill Pr5, An Act respecting Conrad Grebel University College.

Bill Pr6, An Act respecting Redeemer University College.

The Deputy Speaker: At this time, I would like to wish all the members, staff and pages a safe, happy and pleasant summer.

It being 6 of the clock, this House is adjourned until 1:30 of the clock, September 27, 2004.

The House adjourned at 1801.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Alvin Curling

Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers

Deputy Clerk / Sous-greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks at the Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman

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Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Waterloo-Wellington	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Arthurs, Wayne (L)	Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge	Parliamentary assistant to the Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / adjoint parlementaire au président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement
Baird, John R. (PC)	Nepean-Carleton	Deputy opposition House leader / leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant	
Bartolucci, Hon / L'hon Rick (L)	Sudbury	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Bentley, Hon / L'hon Christopher (L)	London West / London-Ouest	Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (L)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Bisson, Gilles (ND)	Timmins-James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	Chief New Democratic Party whip / whip en chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Bountrogianni, Hon / L'hon Marie (L)	Hamilton Mountain	Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse, ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Bradley, Hon / L'hon James J. (L)	St Catharines	Minister of Tourism and Recreation / ministre du Tourisme et des Loisirs
Broten, Laurel C.(L)	Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Parliamentary assistant to the Premier / adjointe parlementaire au premier ministre
Brown, Michael A. (L)	Algoma-Manitoulin	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Natural Resources / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Richesses naturelles
Brownell, Jim (L)	Stormont-Dundas- Charlottenburgh	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Bryant, Hon / L'hon Michael (L)	St Paul's	Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones, ministre responsable du Renouveau démocratique
Cansfield, Donna H. (L)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Energy / adjointe parlementaire au ministre de l'Énergie
Caplan, Hon / L'hon David (L)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy House Leader / ministre du Renouvellement de l'infrastructure publique, leader parlementaire adjoint
Chambers, Hon / L'hon Mary Anne V. (L)	Scarborough East / Scarborough-Est	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Churley, Marilyn (ND)	Toronto-Danforth	Deputy New Democratic Party House leader / leader parlementaire adjoint du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Colle, Mike (L)	Eglinton-Lawrence	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Finances
Cordiano, Hon / L'hon Joseph (L)	York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston	Minister of Economic Development and Trade / ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Craitor, Kim (L)	Niagara Falls	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
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Dhillon, Vic (L)	Brampton West-Mississauga / Brampton-Ouest-Mississauga	
Di Cocco, Caroline (L)	Samia-Lambton	Parliamentary assistant to the minister responsible for democratic renewal / adjointe parlementaire au ministre responsable du Renouveau démocratique
Dombrowsky, Hon / L'hon Leona (L)	Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington	Minister of the Environment / ministre de l'Environnement
Duguid, Brad (L)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing (Urban) / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement (Secteur urbain)
Duncan, Hon / L'hon Dwight (L)	Windsor-St Clair	Minister of Energy, Chair of Cabinet, Government House Leader / ministre de l'Énergie, président du Conseil des ministres, leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Chief opposition whip / whip en chef de l'opposition
Eves, Ernie (PC)	Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey	Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition
Flaherty, Jim (PC)	Whitby-Ajax	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (L)	Oakville	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Travail
Fonseca, Peter (L)	Mississauga East / Mississauga-Est	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Gerretsen, Hon / L'hon John (L)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement, ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Gravelle, Michael (L)	Thunder Bay-Superior North / Thunder Bay-Superior-Nord	
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Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Horwath, Andrea (ND)	Hamilton East / Hamilton-Est	
Hoy, Pat (L)	Chatham-Kent Essex	
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Kormos, Peter (ND)	Niagara Centre / Niagara-Centre	New Democratic Party House leader / leader parlementaire du Nouveau Parti démocratique
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Mauro, Bill (L)	Thunder Bay-Atikokan	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
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Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Parsons, Ernie (L)	Prince Edward-Hastings	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Transportation / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Transports
Patten, Richard (L)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de l'Éducation
Peters, Hon / L'hon Steve (L)	Elgin-Middlesex-London	Minister of Agriculture and Food / ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation
Peterson, Tim (L)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Tourism and Recreation / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Tourisme et des Loisirs
Phillips, Hon / L'hon Gerry (L)	Scarborough-Agincourt	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement
Prue, Michael (ND)	Beaches-East York / Beaches-York-Est	Deputy New Democratic Party whip / whip adjoint du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Pupatello, Hon / L'hon Sandra (L)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Qaadri, Shafiq (L)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Children and Youth Services / adjoint parlementaire à la ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse
Racco, Mario G. (L)	Thornhill	
Ramal, Khalil (L)	London-Fanshawe	
Ramsay, Hon / L'hon David (L)	Timiskaming-Cochrane	Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles
Rinaldi, Lou (L)	Northumberland	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Renouvellement de l'infrastructure publique
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Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
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Smith, Monique M. (L)	Nipissing	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / adjointe parlementaire au ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Smitherman, Hon / L'hon George (L)	Toronto Centre-Rosedale / Toronto-Centre-Rosedale	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Sorbara, Hon / L'hon Greg (L)	Vaughan-King-Aurora	Minister of Finance / ministre des Finances
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Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe-Grey	
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener-Waterloo	
Wong, Tony C. (L)	Markham	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Wynne, Kathleen O. (L)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
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ROYAL ASSENT

The Lieutenant Governor 3283

OTHER BUSINESS

Legislative pages

The Speaker..... 3255

Visitors

Mr Bisson..... 3255

Mr Delaney..... 3255

Mr Chudleigh 3255

Mr Zimmer 3255

Ms Churley..... 3265

TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Jeudi 24 juin 2004

AFFAIRES D'INTÉRÊT PUBLIC ÉMANANT DES DÉPUTÉS

**Loi de 2004 sur la protection
des consommateurs d'essence,**
projet de loi 80, *M. Crozier*
Adoptée3245

**Loi de 2004 confirmant la protection
des contribuables,**
projet de loi 85, *M. Klees*
Rejetée.....3246

PREMIÈRE LECTURE

**Loi de 2004 sur l'agent de surveillance
des prix du carburant,**
projet de loi 115, *M. Gravelle*
Adoptée3249

**Loi de 2004 modifiant la Loi de 1991
sur les hygiénistes dentaires,**
projet de loi 116, *M. Flaherty*
Adoptée3249

**Loi de 2004 sur le statut bilingue
de la ville d'Ottawa,**
projet de loi 117, *M. Bisson*
Adoptée3249
M. Bisson3249

DÉCLARATIONS MINISTÉRIELLES ET RÉPONSES

Langue et culture françaises
M^{me} Meilleur3252
M. Bisson.....3253

DEUXIÈME LECTURE

**Loi de 2004 modifiant la Loi sur le
patrimoine de l'Ontario,**
projet de loi 60, *M^{me} Meilleur*
Débat présumé ajourné.....3283

TROISIÈME LECTURE

**Loi de 2004 sur la protection
de la ceinture de verdure,**
projet de loi 27, *M. Gerretsen*
Adoptée3254

**Loi Sandy de 2004 (modification de la
Loi sur les permis d'alcool),**
projet de loi 43, *M. Parsons*
Adoptée3255

SANCTION ROYALE

Le lieutenant-gouverneur3283

CONTENTS

Thursday 24 June 2004

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Gasoline Consumer Protection Act, 2004, Bill 80, Mr Crozier	
Mr Crozier	3229, 3237
Mr Tascona	3230
Mr Bisson	3231
Mr Gravelle	3233
Mr Miller	3233
Mr Prue	3234
Mr Colle	3235
Mr Brown	3236
Agreed to	3245
Taxpayer Protection Affirmation Act, 2004, Bill 85, Mr Klees	
Mr Klees	3237, 3245
Mr Delaney	3238
Mr Barrett	3239
Mr Prue	3240
Mr Tascona	3242
Mr Wilkinson	3243
Mr McNeely	3243
Ms Scott	3244
Mr Bradley	3244
Negated	3246

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Student busing	
Ms Scott	3246
Ontario Rangers	
Mr Leal	3246
PKU and Fabry's disease	
Mrs Witmer	3247
Gay Pride Week	
Ms Churley	3247
Saunders Secondary School	
Mr Ramal	3247
District of Muskoka	
Mr Miller	3247
Student achievement	
Mr Rinaldi	3248
St Agatha Separate School	
Mr Berardinetti	3248
Government's record	
Mr Levac	3248

FIRST READINGS

Gas Price Watchdog Act, 2004, Bill 115, Mr Gravelle	
Agreed to	3249
Mr Gravelle	3249
Dental Hygiene Amendment Act, 2004, Bill 116, Mr Flaherty	
Agreed to	3249
Mr Flaherty	3249

Ottawa is a Bilingual City Act, 2004,

Bill 117, Mr Bisson	
Agreed to	3249
Mr Bisson	3249

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

Alternative energy sources	
Mr Duncan	3251
Mr O'Toole	3253
Mr Hampton	3253
Langue et culture françaises / French language and culture	
Mrs Meilleur	3252
Mr O'Toole	3252
Mr Bisson	3253

ORAL QUESTIONS

Health premiums	
Mr Flaherty	3255
Mr Sorbara	3255, 3258
Mr Hampton	3257
Mr Duncan	3257
Capital funding	
Mr Hardeman	3256
Mr Caplan	3256
Mr Yakabuski	3257
Mr Wilson	3257
Hospital funding	
Mr Hampton	3258
Mr Smitherman	3258, 3259
Mr Chudleigh	3259
Water quality	
Ms Churley	3260
Mrs Dombrowsky	3260
Family medical leave	
Mr Wilkinson	3260
Mr Bentley	3260
Mr Duncan	3261
Deaf-blind services	
Mr Klees	3261
Ms Pupatello	3261
Community reinvestment fund	
Mr Bisson	3262
Mr Sorbara	3262
Education	
Ms Broten	3262
Mr Kennedy	3262
Government contract	
Mr Runciman	3263
Mr Sorbara	3263
West Nile virus	
Ms Horwath	3263
Mr Smitherman	3263
Doctor shortage	
Mr Milloy	3264
Mr Smitherman	3264

PETITIONS

Taxation	
Mr Klees	3265
Chiropractic services	
Mr Hampton	3265
Mr Murdoch	3266
Mr McMeekin	3266
Mr Ouellette	3267
Mr Kormos	3268
Visitors	
Mr Oraziatti	3265
Water quality	
Mr Barrett	3265
Doctor shortage	
Mr Kormos	3266
Seniors' programs	
Mr Racco	3266
Senior citizens' housing	
Mr Hampton	3266
School zone	
Mr Sterling	3267
Literacy programs	
Mr Hampton	3267
Status of Bill 56	
Mr Qaadri	3267
Mr Duguid	3267
Pension plans	
Mr Kormos	3267
Property taxation	
Mr O'Toole	3268
Health care	
Mr O'Toole	3268

SECOND READINGS

Ontario Heritage Amendment Act, 2004, Bill 60, Mrs Meilleur	
Mr Barrett	3268, 3276
Mr O'Toole	3272
Mr Kormos	3275
Mr Caplan	3275
Mr Marchese	3276
Ms Mossop	3276
Debate deemed adjourned	3283

THIRD READINGS

Greenbelt Protection Act, 2004, Bill 27, Mr Gerretsen	
Agreed to	3254
Sandy's Law (Liquor Licence Amendment), 2004, Bill 43, Mr Parsons	
Agreed to	3255
Mr Parsons	3255

Continued overleaf

023
No. 69



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Legislative Assembly of Ontario

First Session, 38th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 38^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Tuesday 29 June 2004

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Mardi 29 juin 2004

Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 29 June 2004

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 29 juin 2004

*The House met at 1700.
Prayers.*

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I believe I have unanimous consent to move a motion without notice respecting committee business during the summer adjournment and to have the question on the motion put immediately without debate or amendment, with any division bells limited to five minutes and no deferral of any division permitted.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Do we have unanimous consent? Agreed.

COMMITTEE SCHEDULE

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I move that the following committees be authorized to meet during the summer adjournment in accordance with the schedule of meeting dates agreed to by the three party whips and tabled with the Clerk of the assembly to examine and inquire into the following matters:

Standing committee on estimates to consider the estimates of certain ministries;

Standing committee on finance and economic affairs to consider certain legislation referred to it; and to fulfill the review, consultation and reporting obligations as set out in section 143.12(5) of the Securities Act, and specifically the priority recommendations as set out in the Five Year Review Committee Final Report: Reviewing the Securities Act, Ontario, including: securities regulation in Canada and a single regulator system; and the appropriate structure for the adjudicative tribunal of the Ontario Securities Commission; and that the committee submit its final report on or before Monday, October 18, 2004;

Standing committee on general government to consider certain legislation referred to it;

Standing committee on justice policy to review and report on the adequacy of Ontario's emergency management statutes; and that the committee be authorized to adopt the text of a draft bill on the subject matter of this order of reference, and where the text of the draft bill is adopted by the committee, it shall be an instruction to the Chair to introduce such bill in his or her name, as the primary sponsor. The other committee members who support the bill may have their names printed on the face

of the bill as secondary sponsors; and that the committee submit its final report and introduce its legislation on or before Monday, November 1, 2004; and be authorized to adjourn from place to place in North America;

Standing committee on public accounts for the purpose of report writing and that the Chair, one committee member from each recognized party, the clerk and research officer be authorized to adjourn to Fredericton, New Brunswick, to attend the annual Canadian Council of Public Accounts Committees conference;

Standing committee on social policy to consider certain legislation referred to it;

And that the committees be authorized to release reports by depositing a copy of any report with the Clerk of the assembly during the summer adjournment and that upon resumption of the meetings of the House, the Chairs of such committees shall bring any such reports before the House in accordance with the standing orders.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Mr Duncan moves that the following committees be authorized to meet during the summer—

Interjection: Dispense.

The Speaker: Dispensed. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

REFERRAL OF BILL 100

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I believe I have unanimous consent to move a motion pursuant to standing order 72 to discharge the order for second reading of Bill 100 and refer the bill to committee.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Do we have members' consent? Agreed.

Hon Mr Duncan: I move that the order for second reading of Bill 100, An Act to amend the Electricity Act, 1998 and the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 and to make consequential amendments to other acts be discharged and the bill be referred to the standing committee on social policy.

The Speaker: Mr Duncan moves that the order for second reading—

Interjection: Dispense.

The Speaker: Dispensed. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

CONSIDERATION OF BILL 56

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I believe I have unanimous

consent to move a motion respecting consideration of Bill 56, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 in respect of family medical leave and other matters and to have the question put on the motion immediately without debate or amendment, with any division bells limited to five minutes and no deferral of any division permitted.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Do we have unanimous consent? Agreed.

Hon Mr Duncan: I move that when the order is next called for third reading of Bill 56, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 in respect of family medical leave and other matters, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the third reading stage of the bill without debate or amendment. Any division bells required shall be limited to five minutes and no deferral of any division pursuant to standing order 28(h) shall be permitted.

The Speaker: Mr Duncan moves that—

Interjection: Dispense.

The Speaker: Dispensed. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS
AMENDMENT ACT
(FAMILY MEDICAL LEAVE), 2004
LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LES NORMES D'EMPLOI
(CONGÉ FAMILIAL
POUR RAISON MÉDICALE)

Resuming the debate adjourned on June 8, 2004 on the motion for third reading of Bill 56, An Act to amend the

Employment Standards Act, 2000 in respect of family medical leave and other matters.

Hon Christopher Bentley (Minister of Labour): I move third reading of Bill 56.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill be now passed and be entitled as in the motion.

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I believe I have unanimous consent to move a motion without notice, debate or amendment respecting adjournment of the House.

The Speaker: Do we have unanimous consent? Agreed.

Hon Mr Duncan: I move that when the House adjourns today, it stands adjourned until Tuesday, October 12, 2004.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leeds-Grenville): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Would a motion of non-confidence be in order? We have some members in the lobby who would like to participate.

Hon Mr Duncan: I move adjournment of the House.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those against, say "nay."

I think that the ayes have it. Carried.

The House is adjourned until Tuesday, October 12, 2004.

The House adjourned at 1710.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Etobicoke-Centre			
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CONTENTS

Tuesday 29 June 2004

MOTIONS

Committee schedule

Mr Duncan 3285
Agreed to..... 3285

Referral of Bill 100

Mr Duncan 3285
Agreed to..... 3285

Consideration of Bill 56

Mr Duncan 3285
Agreed to..... 3285

THIRD READINGS

Employment Standards Amendment Act (Family Medical Leave), 2004, Bill 56, *Mr Bentley*

Agreed to..... 3286

TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Mardi 29 juin 2004

TROISIÈME LECTURE

Loi de 2004 modifiant la Loi sur les normes d'emploi (congé familial pour raison médicale), projet de loi 56, *M. Bentley*

Adoptée..... 3286



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First Session, 38th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 38^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Tuesday 12 October 2004

Mardi 12 octobre 2004

Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 12 October 2004

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 12 octobre 2004

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

UNEMPLOYMENT

Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): I rise to strongly urge the Ontario government to intervene in all possible ways to stop the erosion of jobs and to provide immediate assistance to the town of Collingwood and to the employees of Nacan starch products, Backyard Products, Blue Mountain Pottery and Keller Electric. With the announcement of the closure of these plants, nearly 500 local residents will be put out of work two months before Christmas.

The town has been working with the Ministries of Agriculture and Food and Economic Development and Trade to secure an ethanol plant for the Nacan site and to find new business opportunities that help secure Collingwood's place in the global economy, but last week's announcement that Backyard Products has closed its doors hasn't helped. Some 160 full-time employees, along with 200 seasonal employees, have been laid off.

The government needs to assist the town to put a sustainable economic strategy in place to attract new businesses and jobs; provide all assistance necessary to laid-off workers and their families, with particular attention to older workers who may have difficulty with finding new jobs or training opportunities; immediately give a share of the provincial gas tax to municipalities like Collingwood so the town can afford the infrastructure and services needed to attract new industry; and put in place a workforce labour adjustment program for the laid-off employees at Backyard Products.

I want to thank Mayor Terry Geddes and council, Catherine Durrant, and the economic development staff for their diligent efforts in promoting Collingwood as one of the best places to live, work and raise a family. In spite of the 500 jobs lost in recent times, Collingwood remains an excellent place to do business, and any businesses wishing to locate there can call 1-888-265-9663.

LIBERAL CAMPAIGN PROMISES

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): Here we are on the first day of the new legislative session, and it looks like another session of Liberal excuses and broken

promises. In the last year, Ontarians have learned the hard way that when it comes to weak leadership and renegeing on promises, Dalton McGuinty takes the cake.

Dalton has been breaking promises almost since the first day on the job: the Oak Ridges moraine, Highway 407 tolls, private hospitals, the hydro rate cap, keeping hydro public, lower auto insurance rates, treatment for autistic kids, health delistings, and the unfair, regressive health tax. After one year of Dalton, it is clear: McGuinty's election promise book is nothing but a fictionary of broken promises, and ordinary Ontarians are worse off. They aren't seeing the better health care and education the Liberals promised, and they have less money in their wallets and purses.

That is where Howard Hampton and the New Democrats come in. You can count on us to fight for ordinary people on the issues that matter most: health care, education, the environment, and fair taxes for everyone. We'll provide the strong, effective opposition Ontarians have come to expect which the Liberals promised, and we'll make sure that the Liberals start delivering results. No more excuses, and no more broken promises.

OPP AWARDS

Mr Jim Brownell (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): I'm happy to rise today to speak about an extraordinary awards ceremony that took place on October 6 in north Glengarry, honouring the citizens of two great eastern Ontario ridings: my own riding of Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh and the riding of my neighbour, Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde, Glengarry-Prescott-Russell.

Let me also take the opportunity to congratulate Mr Lalonde on his new duties as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Transportation.

The annual Ontario Provincial Police awards ceremony celebrates dedication, acts of bravery and community service—three great pillars of our society. Fourteen officers were honoured for 20 to 30 years of service, including Constable Paul Deveau, who was honoured for 40 years in law enforcement. Craig Smith from St Andrews West, Shelley Vaillancourt from Cornwall, and Constable John Hatch from the OPP were all presented with awards for their community service.

Two special award recipients were local residents who were awarded commissioner citations for risking their lives to save others. Mr Richard Arcand from Hawkesbury selflessly saved three neighbours after their house caught fire in February 2003. The second recipient, Mr

Charles Carriere from Moose Creek, saved a woman from her burning car on the 401 near Kingston after witnessing the woman's car lose control and hit a tree.

All the award recipients at the OPP annual awards ceremony are exemplary examples of community service, selflessness and pillars of the law enforcement community. I commend them all for their community service, and I know that all Ontarians are proud of their efforts.

LESLIE M. FROST CENTRE

Ms Laurie Scott (Haliburton-Victoria-Brock): This past summer, while the Legislature was not sitting, the Liberal government made a decision to close one of the most valued outdoor centres in the province.

The Leslie M. Frost Centre has provided the surrounding community, and indeed the province, with irreplaceable education and stewardship programs for decades. The Frost Centre was closed with one week's notice. I was astonished that a government that purports to care about the environment and education would move so quickly to close the Frost Centre with no public consultation and no concern for its employees or the public it serves, including the 5,000 children who were scheduled for programs at the Frost Centre this year.

Over the past several months, I have received nearly 15,000 names on petitions and countless letters and calls from concerned constituents. I am sure that many members on both sides of the aisle have heard from their constituents as well. Later today, I'm going to start tabling some of those petitions.

It's not just individuals who are very concerned about the Frost closure. A group of concerned Ontarians, Perma-Frost, presented a letter to the Premier after the closure. Over 60 groups and individuals signed it. Educators, environmentalists, unions and businesses all joined together, calling upon Dalton McGuinty to reconsider.

Later this week will be the first meeting of the local working group that was formed as a result of the pressure brought to bear in the wake of this government's short-sighted, arrogant and rash decision. I am grateful to the government for finally realizing that they needed to act, but I'm concerned about the fact that, since the closure, the decommissioning of the Frost Centre's assets has continued. No matter what the working group concludes, their jobs will be harder, because it will have to rebuild many programs from scratch.

I wish the working group well, and I know that they will listen to the voices of the people who have benefited and developed a strong attachment to the Frost Centre over the years. I hope the government provides the working group with the resources they need to do their job well.

AGRICULTURE 101

Mr John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex): Last spring, my colleague the member for Peterborough tabled a

resolution that all members spend a day at the farm each year. This resolution led me to issue a challenge to my local Perth County Federation of Agriculture. Working together, we were able, in August, to welcome my urban caucus colleagues from both the GTA and southwest Ontario to Perth-Middlesex.

The purpose of this day was to give members the opportunity to experience first-hand the daily lives of my agricultural constituents. The day was a family affair. Agriculture is a family business in Ontario, and so it was important to me that we made the invitation open to spouses, children, parents and grandparents. All were welcome.

The day offered tours of three local facilities: a dairy, a pork, and an egg-laying operation. Each MPP family was partnered up for the day with a local family to allow one-on-one discussions of the challenges that face the agricultural industry.

1340

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Tim Shute, Paul Nairn and Burnell Kuefer of the Perth County Federation of Agriculture for jointly hosting our inaugural Agriculture 101 event. Special thanks also go out to the commodity groups; the Best Little Pork Shoppe; the West, Anderson and Groenestege host families; and the many buddy families for their warm hospitality.

Importantly, I would like to thank my colleagues and their families for taking time out of their busy schedules to visit my riding and get a first-hand look at the unique issues facing our rural communities. The day was a complete success. Finally, I want to thank my colleague the member for Don Valley West for agreeing to co-host next year's event.

LIBERAL CAMPAIGN PROMISES

Mrs Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): One year ago, this government came to power with a commitment to implement 231 promises, many of which they knew full well they could not keep or afford. Not only have they broken about 37 of these promises, they have tried to hide the true cost of these promises for a year. In doing so, they have betrayed the trust of the people in Ontario.

Let's take a quick look at a few of the Liberal broken promises.

The punitive and regressive health tax was implemented despite a public pledge by the Premier during the election campaign to not raise taxes. Not only did they introduce this health tax, but they are also making Ontarians pay more for less by delisting eye exams, physiotherapy and chiropractic services. This breaks their promise to increase access to care.

By underfunding hospitals, the Liberal government is now on track to break another promise of reducing wait times. Ontario hospitals are over \$600 million short and they will soon have to make the difficult decision of determining what services and staff to cut.

This government, with its track record of broken promises and mismanagement, is creating hardship and anxiety for the people of our province who trusted them to keep their word. Now they see that trust betrayed and their pocketbooks slightly less full.

OKTOBERFEST

Mr John Milloy (Kitchener Centre): Last Friday, I joined thousands of residents from Waterloo region as well as visitors from across the continent at the official keg-tapping ceremony that marked the beginning of Kitchener-Waterloo's 36th Oktoberfest.

Oktoberfest is our area's celebration of its strong local German-Canadian heritage. Officially started in 1969, this eight-day event has become the largest Bavarian festival in North America, with the best Thanksgiving Day parade in all of Canada. Hundreds of thousands of people lined the streets yesterday morning to watch a spectacular parade that included this year's Grand Marshal, Wendel Clark, former captain of the Toronto Maple Leafs.

Over the life of the festival, thousands will enjoy the hospitality at our Festhallen and be able to attend 45 family and cultural events. Beyond the celebrating, the spirit of *Gemueticlichkeit* helps enrich the local economy and benefits over 70 charities and not-for-profit organizations.

I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the hard work of the president, Don Willcox, the executive director, Larry Blundell, the volunteer board of directors and the hundreds of other volunteers who make this festival such a tremendous success, year after year.

As Oktoberfest is still going on, I would also like to invite all of my colleagues in the Legislature as well as all citizens of Ontario to come to Kitchener-Waterloo and help celebrate Canada's great Bavarian festival.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): The place where Ontario's legislative rubber meets our province's road is its economy, and our province is voting on this government's performance with a robust economy.

Ontario's unemployment rate has fallen to its lowest level in more than three years. Ontario businesses have responded to our province's economic climate and how it is improving by creating a net 80,000 new jobs. That's like an entire medium-sized Ontario city all finding work within the last year. And according to the Conference Board of Canada, Ontario can expect this strong GDP performance to continue in the years to come.

Ontario is becoming more attractive to businesses. The management consulting firm KPMG reports that Ontario is now one of the most cost-competitive jurisdictions in the world. This has been done even as Ontario continues to invest in the health care of all of its citizens and in the education of the young minds whose intellectual capital will drive prosperity in the years to come.

One year ago, Ontarians voted for change. Change is what Ontario has received, and Ontario's businesses and its workers like what they see.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Ms Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): Nearly one year ago, Ontarians chose change. Looking back over the past year, we have seen a lot of challenges and a few surprises, including a \$5.6-billion deficit left by Ernie Eves and his Tories.

Through it all, our government has been working hard. We are cleaning up the mess left behind by the previous government, and we are building a better province in which to work, live and raise a family.

What Ontarians care about is how well their children are served by the education system, how well they are cared for by our health care system, and that the economy is strong.

After one year, class sizes in the early grades are down in more than 1,300 schools. We also have more teachers in our schools, including in Nipissing alone, where we have 16 new teachers. This will help improve student test scores in reading, writing and math.

We are also making investments in health, ensuring that another 2,400 nurses are on the job, new MRIs are being put in place, and \$191 million in new funding is being invested in long-term care across the province, including \$1.2 million annually in my riding of Nipissing.

And the economy is enjoying steady growth.

We are delivering change that is making Ontario better. We have stopped the decline in public services and we are now working to improve our services for the people we are privileged to serve. We remain the only party that can deliver the change Ontarians want and need. We look forward to working with Ontarians on three more years of real positive change.

LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): I know that many of you are quite excited seeing that your members are back, but I would much rather we have a bit of quiet here. I know you would like to hear this.

I beg to inform the House that Mr Runciman, the member for the electoral district of Leeds-Grenville, is recognized as the leader of Her Majesty's loyal opposition.

There are also other interesting things to listen to.

REPORT, INTEGRITY COMMISSIONER

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): I beg to inform the House that on August 19, 2004, the report of the Honourable Coulter A. Osborne, Integrity Commissioner for Ontario, responding to the complaint of John Baird, MPP for Nepean-Carleton, regarding the Honourable Greg Sorbara, Minister of Finance, was tabled. An

addendum to this report was tabled on September 8, 2004.

REPORT OF CHIEF ELECTION OFFICER

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): I beg to inform the House that on September 2, 2004, the report of the Chief Election Officer on the preparation and delivery of the 2003 provincial general election was tabled.

REPORTS, INTEGRITY COMMISSIONER

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): I also want to say that I beg to inform the House that on September 23, 2004, the report of the Honourable Coulter A. Osborne, Integrity Commissioner for Ontario, responding to the complaint of Jim Flaherty, MPP for Whitby-Ajax, regarding the Honourable Greg Sorbara, Minister of Finance, was tabled.

Also, I beg to inform the House that on September 23, 2004, the report of the Honourable Coulter A. Osborne, Integrity Commissioner for Ontario, responding to the complaint of Bob Runciman, MPP for Leeds-Grenville, regarding the Honourable Dalton McGuinty, Premier of Ontario, was tabled.

1350

ROYAL ASSENT

SANCTION ROYALE

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): I beg to inform the House that on June 29, 2004, His Honour the Lieutenant Governor was pleased to assent to a certain bill in his office.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr Todd Decker): The following is the title of the bill to which His Honour did assent:

Bill 56, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 in respect of family medical leave and other matters / Projet de loi 56, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi en ce qui concerne le congé familial pour raison médicale et d'autres questions.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mr Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): I beg leave to present a report on drug programs activity from the standing committee on public accounts and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr Sterling: First of all, I would like to thank all members of the public accounts committee for working

in tandem with each other to present these reports that I'm presenting today.

The committee held hearings on a follow-up to the audit that appeared in the Provincial Auditor's 2001 annual report. Members focused their attention and recommendations on six areas: the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care's drug strategy review; timely updates of the Ontario drug benefit formula; prices paid by the ODB; written agreements with brand name drug manufacturers; the ministry's Health Network System, which links it to pharmacies; and pharmacy inspection coverage.

I move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Sterling: I beg leave to present a report on children's mental health services from the standing committee on public accounts and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker: Does the member wish to make a statement?

Mr Sterling: The committee met with the staff of the newly created Ministry of Children and Youth Services. The areas covered by the committee's report and recommendations include quality of service, waiting lists and related capacity issues, performance measurement, and the control of transfer payments to agencies.

I would like to move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker: Mr Sterling moves adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Sterling: I beg leave to present a report on court services from the standing committee on public accounts and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker: Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr Sterling: The committee addressed operational and management aspects of the court services division, namely the administrative structure of the courts, case backlogs, information systems and the use of new technologies, capital projects, and performance reporting as these relate to providing a fair and accessible justice system.

The committee prepared recommendations to address the new administration governing structure; delays in the system; compliance with Management Board directives as they relate to capital projects; property portfolio management matters; and the processing of cases.

I move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Sterling: I beg leave to present a report on the policy and consumer protection services division from the standing committee on public accounts and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker: Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr Sterling: The audit objectives were to determine whether the division had adequate procedures and systems to ensure compliance with the relevant legis-

lation and ministry policies, and secondly, to review the ministry's monitoring of delegated administrative authorities, or DAAs. The areas addressed during the hearings and subsequently in the committee's report included following up on consumer complaints, monitoring of cemetery trust accounts, and the overall performance of the delegated administrative authorities.

The committee's recommendations addressed the ministry's enforcement regime, the cemetery database project, the administration of trust funds, and DAA accountability and governance matters.

I would like to move adjournment of this debate.

The Speaker: Mr Sterling has moved the adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Sterling: Lastly, I beg leave to present a report on the Family Responsibility Office from the standing committee on public accounts and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker: Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr Sterling: The committee reported on the Family Responsibility Office in 2000 and again in 2004. In 2003, the Provincial Auditor concentrated on the policies and procedures in place to enforce support orders and the level of service delivery achieved by the office. The discussion during the hearings concentrated on enforcement, staff resources and performance measurement.

The committee's recommendations covered such areas as the delivery of client services; the proposed case management model; enforcement strategy; impact of new technology; staffing requirements; and assessment through performance measures, benchmarking and client services.

I move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker: Mr Sterling has moved the adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on general government and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr Todd Decker): Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill 26, An Act to amend the Planning Act / Projet de loi 26, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'aménagement du territoire.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL POLICY

Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on social policy and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr Todd Decker): Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill 100, An Act to amend the Electricity Act, 1998 and the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 and to make consequential amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 100, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur l'électricité, la Loi de 1998 sur la Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

All those against, say "nay."

I think the ayes have it.

Call in the members. There will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1359 to 1404.

The Speaker: All those in favour, please rise.

Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Parsons, Ernie
Bartolucci, Rick	Fonseca, Peter	Patten, Richard
Bentley, Christopher	Gerretsen, John	Peters, Steve
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Gravelle, Michael	Peterson, Tim
Bountrogianni, Marie	Hoy, Pat	Phillips, Gerry
Bradley, James J.	Jeffrey, Linda	Pupatello, Sandra
Brotten, Laurel C.	Kennedy, Gerard	Qaadri, Shafiq
Brown, Michael A.	Kular, Kuldip	Racco, Mario G.
Brownell, Jim	Kwinter, Monte	Ramal, Khalil
Bryant, Michael	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Ramsay, David
Cansfield, Donna H.	Leal, Jeff	Rinaldi, Lou
Caplan, David	Levac, Dave	Sandals, Liz
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	Marsales, Judy	Sergio, Mario
Colle, Mike	Matthews, Deborah	Smith, Monique
Cordiano, Joseph	Mauro, Bill	Smitherman, George
Craiton, Kim	McGuinty, Dalton	Sorbara, Greg
Crozier, Bruce	McMeekin, Ted	Takhar, Harinder S.
Delaney, Bob	McNeely, Phil	Van Bommel, Maria
Dhillon, Vic	Meilleur, Madeleine	Watson, Jim
Di Cocco, Caroline	Milloy, John	Wilkinson, John
Dombrowsky, Leona	Mitchell, Carol	Wong, Tony C.
Duguid, Brad	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Duncan, Dwight	Oraziotti, David	Zimmer, David

The Speaker: All those against, please rise.

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Hudak, Tim	Prue, Michael
Baird, John R.	Jackson, Cameron	Runciman, Robert W.
Bisson, Gilles	Klees, Frank	Scott, Laurie
Chudleigh, Ted	Kormos, Peter	Sterling, Norman W.
Churley, Marilyn	Martel, Shelley	Tascona, Joseph N.
Dunlop, Garfield	Martiniuk, Gerry	Wilson, Jim
Flaherty, Jim	Miller, Norm	Witmer, Elizabeth
Hampton, Howard	Murdoch, Bill	Yakubski, John
Hardeman, Ernie	O'Toole, John	
Horwath, Andrea	Ouellette, Jerry J.	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 69; the nays are 28.

The Speaker: The bill is therefore ordered for second reading.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): I beg to inform the House that during the adjournment, the Clerk of the House received reports from the standing committee on

government agencies dated August 24 and September 29, 2004.

Pursuant to standing order 106(e)9, these reports are deemed to be adopted by the House.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): May I at this moment call your attention to, in the Speaker's gallery, Gary Malkowski, a former member for York East from the 35th Parliament. Correction: He is in the east gallery.

I also want to draw your attention to, in the public gallery, Herb Epp from Waterloo North in the 32nd, 33rd and 34th Parliaments.

Welcome.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

ACCESSIBILITY FOR ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 SUR L'ACCESSIBILITÉ POUR LES PERSONNES HANDICAPÉES DE L'ONTARIO

Mrs Bountrogianni moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 118, An Act respecting the development, implementation and enforcement of standards relating to accessibility with respect to goods, services, facilities, employment, accommodation, buildings and all other things specified in the Act for persons with disabilities / Projet de loi 118, Loi traitant de l'élaboration, de la mise en oeuvre et de l'application de normes concernant l'accessibilité pour les personnes handicapées en ce qui concerne les biens, les services, les installations, l'emploi, le logement, les bâtiments et toutes les autres choses qu'elle précise.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Minister?

Hon Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): Not at this time, Speaker; during ministerial statements.

1410

ARCHIVES AWARENESS WEEK ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 SUR LA SEMAINE DE SENSIBILISATION AUX ARCHIVES

Mr O'Toole moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 119, An Act to proclaim Archives Awareness Week / Projet de loi 119, Loi proclamant la Semaine de sensibilisation aux archives.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): Ontario has a rich, colourful and recorded history. Archives play an essential role in the preservation, use and restoration of available documents so that we never lose sight of our collective memory as citizens of Ontario.

CITY OF TORONTO AMENDMENT ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA CITÉ DE TORONTO

Ms Wynne moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 120, An Act to amend the City of Toronto Act, 1997 / Projet de loi 120, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la cité de Toronto.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Ms Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West): If passed, this legislation will give the city of Toronto the power to set its own ward boundaries, determine the number of city councillors, amend the role of community councils and administer its own elections, including setting the length of each term for city councillors, setting the dates of its municipal elections, setting its election finance rules and controlling its voters list. If passed, this legislation will be a meaningful recognition of the maturity and competence of the city, and I look forward to a good debate on this issue.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I seek unanimous consent to put forward motions without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon Mr Duncan: I move, notwithstanding standing order 96(d), that the following changes be made to the ballot list of private members' public business: Mrs Jeffrey and Mr Kular exchange places in order of precedence such that Mr Kular assumes ballot item 67 and Mrs Jeffrey assumes ballot item 42; Mr Yakabuski and Mr Runciman exchange places in order of precedence such that Mr Runciman assumes ballot item 60 and Mr Yakabuski assumes ballot item 33.

Further, I move that, notwithstanding standing order 96(g), notice for ballot items 32, 33, 34 and 35 be waived.

The Speaker: Mr Duncan moves, pursuant to standing order 96(d), that the following changes be made to the—

Interjection: Dispense.

The Speaker: Dispense? Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I seek unanimous consent to move a motion respecting committee membership and to have the question on the motion put immediately, without debate or amendment.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): I think we're anticipating a lot today. Do we have consent for Mr Duncan's motion? Agreed.

Hon Mr Duncan: I move that the following changes be made in the membership of the following committees: standing committee on government agencies, Mr Hudak in place of Mrs Witmer; standing committee on justice policy, Mrs Witmer in place of Mr Hudak.

The Speaker: Mr Duncan moves that the following changes be made in the membership of the following committees: standing committee on government agencies—

Interjection: Dispense.

The Speaker: Dispense? Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES LEGISLATION

LOI SUR LES PERSONNES HANDICAPÉES DE L'ONTARIO

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): Mr Speaker, allow me to welcome you and all members of this Legislature back to this august chamber on this, a very proud day for Ontario.

I say that because today this government introduces the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2004. This is landmark legislation. It will improve access to workplaces and public spaces, employment, customer service, communications and transportation.

L'Ontario devrait être fier de ce projet de loi. Tout le monde mérite la possibilité d'apprendre, de travailler et de jouer dans toute la mesure de son potentiel. Ce projet de loi devrait rendre l'Ontario plus productif. Ce sont tous les résidents et résidentes de l'Ontario qui bénéficient des possibilités offertes à chacun et à chacune d'entre eux.

This bill should make Ontario proud. Every person deserves the opportunity to learn, work and play to his or her full potential. This bill will help make Ontario more productive. All Ontarians benefit when we tap into the potential of each Ontarian. I often say that Ontario succeeds when we all work, dream and build together,

and "all" must certainly include in every way the 1.5 million Ontarians with a disability.

Before the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration tells us more about this bill, I briefly want to acknowledge the work that has gone into it. I especially want to acknowledge the efforts of several advocates for people with disabilities, and specifically mention one: David Lepofsky.

We've all heard it said that someone is made of Teflon when nothing seems to stick to them. I suspect that David is made of Velcro. In fact, he will virtually attach himself to you if you have any carriage, in any way whatsoever, over this file. His passion and determination are a testament, I believe, to the desire of Ontarians with disabilities to have the opportunity to fully contribute to life in this great province of ours.

I want to acknowledge as well the members of the Legislature who have taken a consistent interest in this issue, particularly members of my own caucus who, as critics for this area while in opposition, and now as government members, have made a real and lasting contribution.

Finally, I want to say directly to our fellow Ontarians with disabilities: We need your work. We need your buying power. We need your contributions to this economy and this society that we all share. We need you and all Ontarians to realize your full potential so this great province can fulfill its potential as a place with an appreciation of life and a quality of life that are truly second to none.

1420

Hon Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): Mr Speaker, may I welcome you and all honourable members back to the Legislature for this first day of our autumn sitting and the first day after Thanksgiving.

Ten years ago, a group of 20 Ontarians with disabilities forged a committee with the sole intent of making Ontario barrier-free for people with disabilities. They understood that the aisle of a store may be too narrow to accommodate someone with a wheelchair; a playground may have an insurmountable curb around it; an elevator may have no Braille markings on the buttons; and an on-the-spot job application may be impossible for someone who has dyslexia. An Ontarian who has mental health problems may face stigma in any number of ways, particularly in the workforce.

Even though there has been progress to eliminate barriers for those with disabilities, there is so much more work to be done. That is why today I'm honoured to introduce legislation to meet the dreams and aspirations of those Ontarians who have worked so long and so hard to make Ontario fully accessible. I am honoured to introduce the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act because we need to allow all Ontarians to participate fully in the life of our province.

Making Ontario truly accessible for the 1.5 million Ontarians with disabilities is a matter of vital importance.

We want Ontario to lead, not lag, in accessibility. Together, Ontarians have worked, and are working, to build a province of full inclusion. That is how it should be, and yet for any Ontarian with a disability, discrimination and lack of accessibility are very real: real physical barriers; real technological, communications, bureaucratic barriers, barriers that limit the hopes of young people to achieve their full potential and barriers that deprive senior citizens of their integrity.

Ten years ago, those Ontarians with disabilities put together a simple statement of principles for making our province barrier-free. Those principles are at the heart of the legislation that the government is introducing today. Most significantly, the final principle states that new legislation "must be more than mere window dressing.... It must have real force and effect." This Legislature unanimously adopted that resolution. The disability community supported this approach.

I happen to believe that the earlier legislation, the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, was introduced with good intent and good faith, but it was just too weak. It did not comprehensively cover the private sector. It did not include standards and timelines to eliminate and prevent barriers. The previous legislation did not make a difference in the way that really matters to people with disabilities, like access to stores, restaurants and medical offices. It was opposed by many in the disability community. It was opposed by the opposition parties in the Legislature.

Over the past several years, a number of Liberal members have pushed very hard for the new legislation that I am introducing today. They met with Ontarians with disabilities. They listened to them and they have pushed our government to act. The honourable member for Windsor-St Clair, now the Minister of Energy and House leader, led the way. The now Minister of Agriculture and Food held hearings in every part of the province, and the honourable member for Prince Edward-Hastings has done invaluable work for the disability community for many years. The late Dominic Agostino, our party's first critic on disability issues, was a champion of the first order for this legislation.

I must also recognize the honourable member for Burlington and the honourable member for Trinity-Spadina, who care deeply about this issue, and, of course, the Accessibility Advisory Council of Ontario, who have tirelessly promoted accessibility for people with disabilities. Their support during our province-wide consultations has been essential.

I would like to acknowledge the Premier, who is a forceful advocate for people with disabilities, as was his father before him in this Legislature.

The Premier wrote last year, "We believe that the Harris-Eves government's Ontarians with Disabilities Act does not even begin to adequately address the needs and rights of countless Ontarians. We will introduce ... a strong and effective ... act."

That is precisely what we are doing today. The legislation is very much crafted and fine-tuned by what we

have heard from the disability community and those in other sectors.

Throughout the first part of this year, my former parliamentary assistant, Dr Kular, and I heard from thousands of Ontarians. I want to thank the member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale for his tireless efforts, and I wish him well in his new responsibilities.

I also want to welcome my new parliamentary assistant, the member from London-Fanshawe, who has already approached this legislation with diligence and enthusiasm.

Throughout those consultations this spring, we met with disability organizations; individuals with disabilities; the private sector, including business people of enormous goodwill and determination; leaders from retail businesses, hospitals, colleges and universities, transportation services; and students.

In fact, we had a Webcast that received more than 2,000 hits across the province. Some of those people have joined us today.

I would like to ask my colleagues to acknowledge my friends in the gallery who have so willingly shared their time and knowledge to help us make Ontario accessible: David Lepofsky, who was already mentioned by the Premier, and the Ontarians with Disabilities Act Committee—thank you; the Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario; the Ontario March of Dimes—thank you very much for your efforts; and many others.

This legislation, if passed, will incorporate all 11 principles enunciated by the disability community and agreed to by the Legislature six years ago.

Of course, the government has already moved forward on complementary fronts: expansion of funding for mental health services, major new investments in children's health programs, new housing for Ontarians with developmental disabilities, the first increase in Ontario disability support program payments in 11 years, and increased rebates for vehicles to transport people with physical disabilities.

To make truly comprehensive progress, though, we need legislation that will deliver fundamental changes—real change—to the way we think and act as a society.

This legislation would make us an international leader in accessibility for people with disabilities.

The bill would call for strong action by the provincial government, the broader public sector and, for the very first time, the private sector.

Standards to be met every five years or less to achieve measurable long-term goals could be adopted as regulations, requiring all sectors and people with disabilities to develop them together.

I'm talking about standards in areas that affect people in their day-to-day lives; standards that would address barriers related to physical and mental health, sensory—the full range of developmental and learning disabilities, visible and invisible; standards that would be given the force of law through regulation and enforcement and that would require affected persons and organizations to comply with tough penalties for violators.

Taking tough measures requires people of honour and commitment, and it takes leadership from the business community. Many business leaders have already seen the true value of accessibility in terms of expanded markets for their products and services—an estimated \$25 billion a year, according to a Royal Bank report.

I thank in particular such business organizations as the Retail Council of Canada, the Greater Toronto Hotel Association, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, the Ontario Restaurant Hotel and Motel Association, Dofasco and the Canadian Standards Association.

Every Ontarian should have the opportunity to learn, work, play, participate and contribute to the maximum of their talents, desires and dreams. That is essential to the social and economic vibrancy of this province.

1430

There was a time in this province's history, Mr Speaker, when I would not have been able to address you because women were denied their democratic rights. I personally remember a time when, as a student, engineering co-op placements were limited because some companies did not have washrooms for women. They were deemed an unnecessary expense. Today that is unimaginable.

I want that same inclusive thinking when it comes to disabilities. I want people in this province to say, "Can you imagine there was a time when people complained about the cost of a ramp? Can you imagine there was a time when menus were not available in alternate formats? What were they thinking?"

Through public education we can change attitudes, one of the biggest barriers people with disabilities face. We need to raise a generation of Ontarians who are acutely aware of accessibility, who are determined to create a truly accessible and barrier-free society.

The creation of an accessible Ontario is a vision and a job for all of us. That's our challenge, that is our responsibility and, most importantly, that is our extraordinary opportunity.

As we return here from Thanksgiving, let us give thanks not just for what we have but for what we can become. In that spirit of reaching out for our potential, in that spirit of inclusion, I would like to thank those who assisted me to finish this statement in American Sign Language. Full accessibility benefits us all. It is the cornerstone for strong communities and a strong economy.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Responses?

Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington): It's my pleasure today to rise, on the first day back in the Legislature, to greet this new legislation. I say in all fairness, like many members of this Legislature who have ever grown up in a house with a disabled member, they know how important this legislation is. So in the true spirit of this legislation, we can only express our appreciation for anything that advances the cause for disabled people in our province.

This province has a proud reputation. It was the first jurisdiction in North America to have a human rights code and a human rights commission. This province was

the first, with Bill 125 from our government, to have comprehensive disability legislation, the first disability support program on the continent. So it is fitting that this province today makes an effort to move the yardsticks forward for full citizenship for all of its citizens.

I too would like to acknowledge the presence of a few of the groups who were very supportive and instrumental in advising the former government in terms of developing the first disability legislation in our province. I recognize Dean LaBute, a member of the accessibility council who's in the Legislature today. I certainly encourage the minister to retain this valuable asset of volunteerism for moving forward the agenda, as well as the construction of the disability directorate which was part of that legislation.

As always, these issues are measured in terms of legislation, but they're also measured by financial commitment. Clearly our government was pleased with its \$6-billion investment over eight years to enhance services in accessibility in our province. During the debate on Bill 125, all members made references to the incredible amount of investment required. Today's announcement and legislation has not been costed; I understand that media questions earlier today were not satisfied. But I recall vividly, during the debate on Bill 125 when it was tabled by our government, the member for Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot very clearly saying, "I don't care what it costs. We should just spend all the money necessary." Although that's a very Liberal view of the world, the member for St Catharines, participating and laying out the official position for the Liberal Party at the time, indicated that any action similar to the legislation being passed today would amount to downloading and therefore the province should pay for all of these costs. Now, if that still remains the official position of the Liberal Party and therefore the government of the day now, if that is the case, then we need to have a full costing of the implications of this legislation.

It's interesting to note that about 80% of Bill 125 has been retained in this legislation. It has been modified. You are dismantling the old legislation. However, what's fascinating to me is that for the first time in my 20 years in this building, you're saying you're going to repeal the bill but you have to repeal it in sections over the next 10 years because it has within it the accessibility planning framework, unique anywhere in North America, that we have here.

Briefly, Minister, I want you to be aware that the largest single resistance I got as Minister of Citizenship was from AMO and from municipalities. What occurred in Bill 125 was to empower disabled persons in their own municipalities to literally not allow a building to be built unless it was compliant to the standards set in that community—minimum standards set by the province, but even better standards. I notice that your legislation confirms that and takes it even further. I notice that your penalty provisions in the act take the fine for filing false documents, whereas in the previous legislation those were outright fines of \$50,000 for non-compliance.

We will participate in the discussions and the debates. It was frustrating for me as the Minister of Citizenship that the Liberal Party never participated in amendments or in bringing forward ideas. I want to reassure you that you can count on the Progressive Conservative Party.

Interjection.

Mr Jackson: Not one amendment was tabled by your critic. That is a fact.

You can count on the Progressive Conservative Party, under the leadership of John Tory, to work with you, Minister, to make this the best legislation in the country. Thank you.

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): It is indeed a privilege and an honour to be here on this day, the opening of the Legislature, and a privilege and an honour that the first bill introduced is the Ontarians with Disabilities Act.

It has taken many long years, over three successive governments, over four or five terms of office now, for an act to come before us. I have to tell you, Gary Malkowski was introduced earlier to the Legislature. He is sitting there. He was the author of the first Ontarians with Disabilities Act. He was there trying to do what I think was the right thing all those years ago.

We saw, after his act failed to pass and employment equity failed to pass, that a new government came along and tried their best, I think, to bring in an Ontarians with Disabilities Act, but it was severely watered down. It was pretty bad, I have to say. Even though Cam Jackson, the member from Burlington, spoke and was very passionate about it, it was a watered-down bill that did not get the support of the opposition parties and indeed did not pass. It was withdrawn because many, many people, including the opposition parties and the disabled community, saw that it was not as good as the original bill introduced by then member Malkowski from York East.

I have to say I'm a little disappointed in what we have today. It's sad to see how minimal the commitment to the disabled actually is. It has been reintroduced today. You know, I go back to that hallowed day, I guess, October 29, 1998, when all parties in this Legislature passed the motion. I want to read just a little bit of what you promised, members on that side of the House who were here. You promised to "seek to achieve a barrier-free Ontario for persons with disabilities within as short a time as is reasonably possible, with implementation to begin immediately upon proclamation." That's what was promised six years ago.

Today we have to look at what has actually happened, and I look only to section 1 of the bill. Section 1(a) says,

"The purpose of this act is to benefit all Ontarians by

"(a) developing, implementing and enforcing accessibility standards in order to achieve accessibility for Ontarians with disabilities with respect to goods, services, facilities, occupancy of accommodation, employment buildings, structures and premises"—all of which are good, but then the kicker—"on or before January 1, 2025"—21 years from now; not as soon as reasonably practicable but 21 years from now.

1440

That is a whole generation of Ontarians who will grow up and not see total equality. Yes, they may see marginal improvements that you're promising, but they are never going to see total equality until 2025. This whole generation has been waiting 10 years and now they are expected to wait another 21 years.

The reality is that what you are setting up here is little more than a study group. The reality is that the standards you are going to set by regulation—you are going to do that only after you consult with the affected businesses and the affected municipalities who have shown in the past that they are often very reluctant to spend money where they need to spend it.

How are you going to begin immediately? That's the question I have of you. Where are the standards in this bill? I can't find them. Where is the money for enforcement? There's no money for enforcement. In fact, the minister responsible for the budget has openly mused about laying people off. Where is the funding for churches, for community centres, for non-profits, for municipalities? Who is going to pay for all this?

This is a big announcement today. In your first budget you promised many things and you have not delivered those for the disabled. You promised to help them but you eliminated the 8% provincial tax on the vehicles that carried them around. You are fighting in court parents with autistic children. Even though you've given some 3% to ODSP as a payment increase, that is really quite pitiful in the grand scheme of things.

To reiterate: There is no intervener funding, the regulations are not spelled out, and the 2025 date is certainly not acceptable to us or to the people who are working on this bill.

ORAL QUESTIONS

MINISTERS' INTEGRITY

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leader of the Opposition):

At the outset, I want to say that I'll treasure the warm reception I received earlier. I'll treasure it because I suspect that it will be short-lived, starting now on the government benches.

My first question is to the Premier. I'd like to ask you a number of questions that relate to the ethical standards of your government and the behaviour of your cabinet ministers.

When you were on this side of the House, you had a great deal to say about ministers living up to a high standard of ethical behaviour. You said in June this year, "I believe the people of Ontario have a right to know ... about the nature of ... ethical standards that you set for your caucus, your cabinet and others who work for you." Premier, in the spirit of that right-to-know declaration, can you tell us what standards you are setting for your ministers and staff when it comes to approaching

stakeholders for contributions to the Liberal Party of Ontario?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): Let me take the opportunity at the outset to congratulate the interim leader on the assumption of his new responsibilities. I wish him nothing but the very best in the new capacity.

I'm sure he has more information that he's going to provide with respect to that opening question. But let me say that we have been through our first year, and I am very proud of the standard we have set as a government when it comes to integrity, when it comes to the behaviour of our ministers, the behaviour of our cabinet and the behaviour of our government generally—very proud of that, Speaker.

Mr Runciman: The Premier may want to revise that answer as we proceed.

The Premier said in April 2000, "I believe that cabinet ministers should live up to a high standard of responsibility and unquestionable ethical behaviour." In that vein, Mr Premier, do you think it's appropriate for a minister and/or his staff to be pursuing their stakeholders, people who have a vested interest in the decisions made by your government, for donations to the Liberal Party of Ontario? Do you think that's appropriate, and if not, what are you going to do about it?

Hon Mr McGuinty: I would expect that all members of the cabinet and indeed all members of the government would respect the rules when it comes to soliciting donations.

If the member opposite, the Leader of the Opposition, has some specific complaint that he would like to make public or that he would like to refer to the Integrity Commissioner, then we would only be too pleased to co-operate in any way possible.

Every single complaint that has been lodged with the Integrity Commissioner to date has been rejected by the Integrity Commissioner. Notwithstanding any overtures, complaints or allegations made by members opposite, the Integrity Commissioner—an independent, objective third party—has found in each and every instance that this government is blameless.

Mr Runciman: We expected a more fulsome explanation from the individual who claimed to be the champion of integrity and accountability.

Premier, as a final supplementary, we've been contacted by a number of officials in the health sector who are quite upset with direct approaches by a key member of the Minister of Health's staff asking them to purchase tickets or tables for the minister's fundraisers. I have an e-mail that was given to me by a health sector employee.

Mr Todd Ross, who is responsible for appointments in the minister's office, has reached out to touch virtually everyone in the health care community in order to fatten the Liberal Party's bank account.

If Ontarians want to be considered for a public appointment or want to have their voice heard during the development of public policy, are they required to cut a cheque to the Liberal Party in order to get their foot in the door? Is this the new McGuinty Ontario?

Hon Mr McGuinty: This is yet another in an endless series of spurious allegations which the Leader of the Opposition seems to luxuriate in.

I am advised that this individual is not employed by the Ministry of Health. I'd tell the member opposite that if he has some specifics or some real particulars he'd like to present to us or to the Integrity Commissioner, we would be only too pleased to respond to those.

I can say this: We have set a very high standard for ourselves. We are committed to improving the quality of life for Ontarians. I am pleased and proud that we've made significant progress, whether in health care, education, the environment or the economy.

Today, it was with a great deal of pride that the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration introduced the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2004.

Those are the things that we are working on. Those are the things that we are focused on. That's what this government is all about.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): New question.

Mr Runciman: According to the government phone book, that individual is working in the minister's office. We have a date on the e-mail as well.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. We'll give the Leader of the Opposition an opportunity to ask the question.

GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leader of the Opposition): This is another question of ethics and integrity that involves the Minister of Health, but I'm going to direct my question to the Premier.

Perhaps, Premier, you can explain to this House why, time after time, we've seen highly paid positions of influence handed to your Liberal cronies. The most recent example is the appointment of Elinor Caplan to review the home care system.

It has become clear over the past year that it pays to be a Liberal. Time after time, we've seen party loyalists appointed to panels, boards and commissions for various levels of remuneration. But this appointment takes the cake. You might say that this was the mother of all appointments.

You also broke your government's own rules and regulations and awarded Mrs Caplan an untendered contract.

You're paying Mrs Caplan the equivalent of \$140,000 a year. That's more than the Minister of Health.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Could I have some order, please?

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): This has gone downhill from when Ernie was here.

The Speaker: Order, Minister of Finance.

The Leader of the Opposition.

Mr Runciman: The government is paying Mrs Caplan the equivalent of \$140,000 a year. That's more

than the Minister of Health. There might be some justification in that, but we won't get into it.

1450

Premier, you are the chief of the watch for the government. You have repeatedly spoken out about ending cynicism in government and then you let appointment after appointment go unchecked and leave taxpayers on the hook for thousands of dollars in salaries being paid to your Liberal cronies. Premier, the question—

The Speaker: Thank you. Premier?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I am hopeful that at some point somebody over there, but the Leader of the Opposition in particular, will begin to address those issues that weigh heavily on the minds of Ontario families, like their health care, like their education, like the nature of their environment and what's happening with respect to jobs and the economy.

Let me remind the member opposite of some of the people we have been proud to retain for their ability, competence and integrity—I include on this very short list Bob Rae, Bill Davis, Marion Boyd and Jake Epp, all capable, competent people—and we will continue to do so as we move forward.

Mr Runciman: Those good appointments certainly pale in the wake of the number of Liberal appointments.

Premier, while you were in opposition, shortly before the election, you said—and I'm paraphrasing—"At the end of the day, the Premier has to set some standards for his cabinet and his cabinet ministers." Then you warned your new MPPs to beware of human frailties. You said that political—

Interjection.

The Speaker: Minister of Finance, can you come to order, please.

Mr Runciman: Mr Speaker, I hope you'll show some latitude if they keep interrupting my questions.

The Premier warned his new MPPs to beware of human frailties. He said that political staff—and Mrs Caplan apparently is political staff—would undergo unusually rigorous screening to avoid conflicts of interest or using positions for personal gain.

Premier, your latest appointment is a woman who's no stranger to Ontario politics. You've appointed a person who was forced to resign from cabinet due to conflict-of-interest charges, the same person who was demoted from the Chrétien cabinet for, according to the gospel of the Toronto Star, not having a firm grip on a difficult department.

Premier, this appointment speaks to the credibility and integrity of your administration. Will you show some leadership and accountability? Will you step in and put this appointment on hold pending a complete review from the committee on government agencies? Will you do that?

Hon Mr McGuinty: A few more names that I'm sure the Leader of the Opposition will be interested in learning about, people whom we have also appointed: Brian Coburn, Marilyn Mushinski, Bill Saunderson, David

Crombie. I look forward to further questions so I can further enlighten him with respect to the number of Tories we've been appointing since we got into government.

Mr Runciman: I think the Premier requires enlightenment on a range of issues. Clearly the Premier doesn't like the question because it strikes a little close to his cabinet and speaks to the ethics of those the Premier has advising him. You see, the Premier is leery of answering because his continued appointment of Liberal cronies is making him look bad.

Taxpayers deserve to know the going rate for being a loyal Liberal. Mrs Caplan just received a \$70,000 payout for her time as a federal member. She was granted an approximately \$700,000 pension buyout for her time as a provincial MPP. And now you want taxpayers to pay her another \$140,000 annualized, plus expenses. Did I miss anything, or is that just a partial list?

Premier, how can you justify appointing a lifetime Liberal to a position that pays \$140,000 per year on top of expenses and pensions without any review or consultation? Will you commit today to send the appointment of Elinor Caplan to the legislative committee on government agencies in order to afford the transparency that an appointment of this magnitude deserves? Will you do that?

Hon Mr McGuinty: I have tremendous confidence in Elinor Caplan, who has served as Minister of Health in this Legislature, who served in the federal government, who has a lengthy record of experience and has demonstrated tremendous competency and integrity. I would also say the very same thing about one Bette Stephenson, whom we have also appointed in our capacity as a government. These are both people who are impeccable in terms of their character, who are supremely competent when it comes to the responsibilities they have assumed.

We will continue to bring that approach to the appointments this government makes. It is not a matter of political stripe. It is a matter of looking for the best people to get the job done, and we will continue to do that.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Before I ask the leader of the third party to ask his question, I am going to ask the government side to tone their noise down a bit. It's the only opportunity the opposition has for a chance to ask questions.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Why didn't you stop the clock?

The Speaker: Order. I'm having too many interruptions going back and forth. I'm also going to ask the opposition to get your questions in under the required time.

HEPATITIS C

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. Your first year has been a year of excuses and broken promises: promises of

Highway 407 toll caps, of preventing development on the Oak Ridges moraine, of preserving the Hydro rate cap, the promise not to delist health care services, promises to help autistic children and promises of no new taxes. On issue after issue, you said one thing before the election and have done exactly the opposite after.

There is one issue that is far too important for more McGuinty government broken promises, and that's the issue of health care. Will you commit today that all the federal government money for health care will be used by your government to fund health care services and nothing else?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): It's very interesting to find that the leader of the third party now has become a champion for public health care. The reason that just recently we were able to prevent the expansion of an American company into Ontario which was going to prey on Ontario seniors and their fears was because of the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act, which this government proudly passed under the championship of George Smitherman.

But I want to note that the member opposite voted against that very legislation, which we were able to use in a very expeditious and aggressive fashion to protect public health care in Ontario. If Ontarians want to know where we stand on health care, they will know that we support public health care. They should also now know that the members opposite voted against the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act.

Mr Hampton: It was a very direct question: Does the Premier commit that the new federal health money will be spent on health services and nothing else? He couldn't answer.

I want to draw your attention to federal health care dollars related to hepatitis C victims. In 1998, Ontario and other provinces, with Ottawa, created an agreement to help some of the unfortunate and forgotten victims of hepatitis C. Under the agreement, Ontario received \$135 million to provide enhanced health services for those victims. As I say, it's supposed to be used to provide enhanced health services, but it is clear from the Ministry of Health report released on October 1 that the McGuinty government, like the Conservative government before it, isn't using that money for enhanced health services. In fact, the report doesn't even mention enhanced health services. What you're doing is simply funnelling the money into OHIP and then using it like you would use any other OHIP money. It's not going to enhanced health services.

Premier, you said in the election, "Choose change." Why is your policy with respect to hepatitis C victims the same as the policy of the previous Conservative government?

Hon Mr McGuinty: I know the Minister of Health is eager to speak to this.

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Earlier in the summer, we were requested by individuals to make known what had come of the expenditures that the government of Canada,

stemming from a legal agreement with the provinces, had spent on the provision of services for individuals in our province with hepatitis C. We took the time necessary to call upon those individuals expert in the provision of services for people with Hepatitis C to develop an appropriate methodology to determine the extent to which all of those investments and dollars had been invested in the expansion of services for people in our province with hepatitis C.

We've been able to confirm that, in point of fact, consistent with the agreement that was signed by the government of Canada and all provinces, including members opposite, the government of Ontario had acted in accordance with that agreement.

1500

What remains outstanding, of course, is an interpretation that goes back to the time that agreement was signed whereby some people had determined that the language suggested that was going to be for out-of-pocket payments. But the legal agreement is very, very clear, and I've been keen to share all the available information that has come to our knowledge with people concerned about this file. I would be happy to provide more information in a supplementary.

Mr Hampton: I find the minister's answer interesting, because this is a copy of the press release and the report of October 1, and it doesn't mention enhanced services. In fact, it avoids the words "enhanced services." And this is a copy of the agreement between Ontario and the federal government. It is very clear. It says "health services for hepatitis C that are not fully insured by publicly financed health care systems in Canada." It talks specifically about enhanced health care services above and beyond what is provided by OHIP.

What is clear from this October 1 report from the Ministry of Health is that you are doing exactly what the former Conservative government did. You're taking federal money that should be used to provide enhanced health care services for unfortunate hepatitis C victims and you're not using it for those enhanced health care services.

In the election, Mr McGuinty said, "Choose change." Tell me, Minister, where is the change when you're doing the same despicable thing that the former Conservatives did in terms of letting down those hepatitis C victims?

Hon Mr Smitherman: I have a very significant point of departure from the honourable member. I am not one of those inclined to think that the provision of extraordinarily good care from our system of health care in this province should be associated with the word "despicable."

The fact of the matter is that the Ministry of Health in this province, through governments and this government, stands for the idea, the principle, that we should always be looking to enhance the quality of care that's available. The word "enhancement" comes to mean many things. One, for instance, is the fact that all the time we have new medical discoveries related to the treatment of

hepatitis C which we seek to take advantage of as quickly as is possible for the people struggling with hepatitis C in our province. This includes members of my family. This is an issue that I am very, very familiar with.

We've gone further than just to make that accounting that was requested of us. We've asked John Plater, who is a distinguished leader from the hepatitis C community, to bring back a group to take a look at a strategic plan that had been developed by the previous government but unfortunately had left some people out of the mix, to do a very, very quick review of their work and to come forward with a strategic plan that we can all share to make sure not only that we provide the best possible treatments in our—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Thank you. New question.

Mr Hampton: The minister wants to talk about what he might do in the future. Minister, this is a confidential letter from a friend of yours.

The Speaker: To whom is the question?

Mr Hampton: To the Minister of Health.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr Hampton: It's from the former federal Minister of Health, Anne McLellan, to your predecessor, the Conservative Minister of Health. She says there's no difficulty with interpretation. She said then, in January 2003, that Ontario was mispending the hepatitis C money, that it was not being used for the enhanced health services for hepatitis C victims that it should have been used for.

You knew this. Your officials have known this since January 2003. You've been the government for over a year now. Yet it's clear from your own report, where you don't even mention enhanced health services for victims of hepatitis C, that you are following exactly the same policy of the Conservative government you replaced.

Mr McGuinty said, "Choose change." Minister, I ask you again, where is the change for these unfortunate hepatitis C victims when you're short-changing them exactly as the Conservative government short-changed them before you?

Hon Mr Smitherman: The change is there, and it's clear and apparent for people in this province with hepatitis C. The change is this: that we've assembled a group because we want to have a strategic plan which gives us the chance as a province to make sure that at the same time we're delivering the best possible quality of care, we're also reaching out and finding those people who might have hepatitis C and don't know it and helping to prevent hepatitis C infections in the future.

With respect to that member's interpretation of the letter that came, I was provided with a copy of this letter last week. I am seeking to obtain clarification from the federal government, because what is absolutely clear is that a letter written from one minister to another, which I think we both agree does not have the same legal standing as an agreement between jurisdictions, which was signed off on by members of that party while in government—there is surely, across the breadth of our country, a very clear departure from the interpretation that the honourable member brings to the discussion. All

provinces across the country, to the best of the knowledge that we've been able to gain to date, have acted in the same fashion as has the province of Ontario, which is to use those resources to make sure that the quality of care we're providing for people with hepatitis—

The Speaker: Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr Hampton: Well, Minister, I just spoke with officials in Manitoba. Manitoba has used that hepatitis C money to provide coverage for drugs and medications that otherwise wouldn't be covered in Manitoba. They've used it to provide enhanced services. You've been the Minister of Health for over a year and you are doing exactly what the Conservatives did before you, and all we're hearing from you today is that somewhere down the road you might do something different—another McGuinty government promise. We've heard lots of those.

Minister, this is a cabinet submission dated May 5, 2003. What's important in it is that Ministry of Health lawyers, the same Ministry of Health lawyers who are there now, advised that the Ontario government is mispending hepatitis C dollars. They say, "The agreement supports the conclusion that the parties intended that ... the funds would be used to provide for and enhance the range and accessibility of health care services for individuals with hepatitis C." They say further on, "To arrive at a different conclusion appears to ignore the spirit of the agreement." And then they advocate that Ontario start using it for enhanced services.

Minister, you've been doing for a year exactly what the Conservatives before you did. When are you going to provide the enhanced services required in this agreement? When are we going to see "choose change" instead of more broken promises?

Hon Mr Smitherman: I say to the honourable member in response, I'm going to have the opportunity on Friday, Saturday and Sunday to sit alongside the Minister of Health from the province of Manitoba, Dave Chomiak, a man I have a lot of confidence in. I think when we go through it list by list by list of the services we're providing in the province of Ontario for people with hepatitis C, it's going to bear a striking resemblance to the provision of services for people with hepatitis C in Manitoba.

Just because of his desire to have a partisan stamp on these services, the honourable member seeks to create some distinction which is artificial. The fact of the matter is that provinces and the federal government came together many, many years ago and signed an agreement. In reading the agreement, as many members of the media have had the opportunity to do over the past number of weeks, what is absolutely clear is that there is a decided distinction between the rhetoric associated with that agreement and what the agreement legally binds provinces to provide.

But to suggest that we're resting on our laurels is inappropriate. We are working with leaders in the hepatitis C community to make sure that the province of Ontario stands out in this nation as an exemplary record for providing care for people with hepatitis C.

Mr Hampton: The minister tries to refer to some legal mumbo-jumbo. Your own health ministry lawyers will tell you there is no mumbo-jumbo. They tell you clearly that Ontario has an obligation to provide enhanced services for victims of hepatitis C. They tell you clearly that Ontario has that obligation to spend those dedicated federal health dollars in the way that is outlined here. You haven't been doing that for over a year. You've been following the same discredited policy of your Conservative predecessors.

Mike McCarthy is someone who was infected with hepatitis C through tainted blood, and this is what he has to say: "Now, six years later, not one nickel has gone for any enhanced care, treatment or out-of-pocket expenses reimbursement for tainted-blood victims.... Victims feel like they are a bag of garbage left by the side of the road."

Minister, your Premier said, "Choose change." What I hear you doing today is defending the same tired, discredited policy of the previous Conservatives. When are we going to get the change rather than more broken promises?

1510

Hon Mr Smitherman: It strikes me that the member's tripping all over himself in an effort to create distinctions that aren't there. The fact of the matter is that Ontario has moved forward in a fashion that's entirely consistent with the legal agreement and consistent with what other provinces have done.

But he asks the question, "What have we been doing for the last year?", and here's what I'll tell him. We've been working very hard to invest again in community-based care; to make sure, as an example, that someone in this province, in any part of this vast province, who's struggling with the challenge of finding access to a doctor because they stopped producing them when they were a government and because they were slow to get back to it—we've been working tirelessly to expand the role of the family practitioner, to provide more incentive for them to provide community-based comprehensive care. The fact remains that we're charged with a terrific responsibility, and I'm honoured to be involved in it.

With respect to hepatitis C, here's the commitment that we make. This is our bottom line. The province of Ontario will stand out in Canada as a jurisdiction that is prepared, able, and is providing a level of care that lives up to the high standards expected. What that means is that as new technologies become available and new approaches become available, like new medicines, the province of Ontario will be in a position to support those expanded initiatives, and we will do so by working in co-operation with health care providers and especially with the hepatitis C community.

LIBERAL CAMPAIGN PROMISES

Mr Jim Flaherty (Whitby-Ajax): The Minister of Health's answers were so long, I've forgotten my question.

My question is for the Premier. Premier, when you ran for office to be Premier more than a year ago now, you made a lot of promises—in fact, more than 231 promises. You costed them, or at least you told the people of the province of Ontario that you costed them. You said that their total cost is \$5.9 billion.

Shortly after you became the government about a year ago, it became known that there was a costing report by the public service of Ontario, the trusted public service of the province. You were asked about that report. In fact, we made an information request for the report under the freedom of information act, and you and your government fought that tooth and nail for almost a full year, until last week, when, as a result of the order, we got the report. Now we know why. The costing by the public service was in excess of \$18 billion—more than three times what you told the people of the province of Ontario.

Will you now come clean and admit to the people of Ontario that you underestimated the costs of your promises by a factor of three—from less than \$6 billion to more than \$18 billion—and that's why you hid the report?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I'm sure that the member opposite would want to be reminded of how the Deputy Minister of Finance described someone's intention to tally up the numbers he put together. He said, specifically, that it would be wrong and "misleading," to quote the Deputy Minister of Finance. He said, "So if somebody were to go through and just add up the columns—that can be done—it would be information that's actually meaningless."

Perhaps we shouldn't be surprised that the member opposite, being part of a party that hid a \$5.6-billion deficit from the people of Ontario, is now prepared to use information that is described by the Deputy Minister of Finance as wrong and misleading with respect to specific numbers.

Mr Flaherty: I understand the Premier's answer to the people of Ontario: "Don't add up the numbers." When they add up the numbers, they get a very different number than he gave the people of Ontario when he added up his numbers and sought election in the province. This is a question of untrustworthiness—or if it's not untrustworthiness, it's plain incompetence. You say "\$5.9 billion" to the people of Ontario. You say, "Elect me because I can do these 231 things and more for \$5.9 billion." You get elected, you get a report from the public service, you hide the report, you go through a budget with \$4 billion of new spending and you don't come clean with the people of Ontario. Tell me, should they consider you untrustworthy, incompetent or both?

Hon Mr McGuinty: I just can't put it any better than did the Deputy Minister of Finance: wrong and "misleading." You cannot tally up those figures. The member opposite knows that some of those stretch out over an expenditure period that is in excess of some 39 years—wrong and misleading.

OMA AGREEMENT

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. One year ago you told people to choose change, and you said that people would get an open and transparent government. Now we find that you have, behind closed doors, negotiated a deal with the Ontario Medical Association and you refuse to tell the people of Ontario what is in the deal.

This is about health care for the people of Ontario, not about your secret arrangement with the doctors. Premier, you know the details, your cabinet knows the details and now the doctors know the details, but you insist on keeping the public in the dark.

I ask you, as the Premier who promised open and transparent government, what are you trying to hide from the public? Will you release the entire agreement so that people can find out what's happening to their health care system?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I wonder why the member opposite is so critical of this particular process when it's one he followed flawlessly when they sat in government. There is a tradition in Ontario, when we negotiate these agreements with the medical community, that the agreement is subject to ratification first by doctors, and once that has been completed, then it is made public. That's something all governments, of all political stripes, have respected in the past and we will respect it in our term.

Mr Hampton: Premier, you may think that explanation passes, but what we've found out through some of the leaks is that in fact this agreement has a number of side deals. One of the side deals says to doctors that if they trim \$200 million from the Ontario drug benefit plan—that is, if they take benefits away from the disabled, the poorest and the elderly—your government will bonus the doctors with \$50 million more money. Many doctors are objecting to this. Some call it a bribe. Some call it an inappropriate way to address health care issues.

Premier, what's your impression? Don't you think the people of Ontario deserve to know what's in this agreement before they wake up and find more side deals like this that don't enhance health care and in fact take away benefits from the most vulnerable people in the province? When are you going to open up the agreement? When are you going to tell them about the side deals, Premier: after more people get hurt?

Hon Mr McGuinty: I'm not, for all the obvious reasons, about to speculate on the contents of that agreement. I would suggest that the member opposite has just enough information now to be dangerous with respect to speculating about the contents of the agreement.

What I can say by way of facts is this: When the member opposite formed the government, they froze funding for drugs. We have, in our first year, put a quarter of a billion dollars more into drugs. I think that speaks to our values.

ELECTRICITY RESTRUCTURING
RESTRUCTURATION DU SECTEUR
DE L'ÉLECTRICITÉ

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): Ma question s'adresse au ministre de l'Énergie. Minister, the McGuinty government is charting new ground in the history of Ontario's electricity sector. The positive changes the government is making will ensure Ontarians continued prosperity by creating a conservation culture and a cleaner Ontario while delivering a reliable, sustainable and diverse supply of competitively priced power for Ontario.

Bill 100, the Electricity Restructuring Act, 2004, provides the basis for achieving this by proposing sweeping legislative change. Minister, what will be the role of the Ontario Energy Board under the proposed legislation to restructure the electricity sector?

1520

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): I'm pleased to answer the question. Under Bill 100, the Ontario Energy Board would have a stronger role in protecting Ontario consumers through licensing and rate regulation, something the previous government rejected. They left small consumers at the will of the free market. The OEB would ensure economic efficiency, cost-effectiveness and financial viability of the elements of Ontario's electricity system. Its mandate is to protect consumers and ensure that the industry operates efficiently and effectively. Bill 100 strengthens its role by mandating it to publicly review electricity plans prepared by the Ontario Power Authority and market rules prepared by the IESO. It's a venue for stakeholder and public involvement in the energy sector.

With regard to electricity rates, the OEB would approve an annual rate plan for low-volume and other smaller consumers. These consumers would pay a blended price. It would be based on regulated contract and forecasted competitive prices. This will ensure that prices are fair, stable and predictable, something this province desperately needs to generate new electricity.

M. Lalonde: Merci, monsieur le ministre, de m'avoir donné les grandes lignes du rôle que jouera la commission.

Minister, Ontario now has about 31,000 megawatts in generation capacity. Between now and 2020, over 80% of Ontario's current electricity generating capacity, which represents 25,000 megawatts, needs to be refurbished, conserved or replaced. Given the reality that previous governments failed to plan ahead and built very little new capacity over the past 10 years, under the proposed legislation what will the government do to ensure that Ontario's energy supply is enough to keep pace with our population and economic growth?

Hon Mr Duncan: The member is quite right. Until the introduction of Bill 100, there was no existing institution responsible for ensuring that we have enough electricity to keep the lights on in Ontario. That was

something ignored by the Conservatives, something ignored by the NDP. Bill 100 proposes to create a new institution, the Ontario Power Authority. It would be responsible for ensuring long-term energy supply and adequacy. Its role will be to ensure that 20 years from now this province has adequate, affordable power that will enable us to grow and prosper economically, as we have done under the first year of change in Ontario in the McGuinty government.

These changes, coupled with the economic management of this government, mean real change that means more jobs, better jobs, protection for the people of this province and ultimately better health care and better education, change that we're delivering every day of this mandate and change that we as a government are very proud of.

GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): My question is to the Minister of Health. I would like to follow up on a question put by my colleague from Leeds-Grenville to the Premier which the Premier refused to answer.

Minister, you are the same minister who's threatening to take hospital administrators to the woodshed for mispending money, for spending money where you don't feel it's appropriate, and yet with regard to the hiring of Elinor Caplan, this all-in-the-family type of contract issue, you have taken the same kind of hiring practice that you condemned when you were in opposition.

I want to make it very clear that I don't call into question Ms Caplan's competence. What I am calling into question, however, is your own competency and judgment. First of all, this was an untendered contract worth some \$500,000, out of which Ms Caplan is being paid the equivalent of \$140,000 a year.

Mr Minister, how do you justify taking administrators from hospitals to issue about the mispending of money when you can make this kind of expenditure without breaking—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Thank you. The Minister of Health.

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Firstly, I'd like to thank the member from—what's his riding called?—two-tier for his question.

Interjections.

Hon Mr Smitherman: That wound may not yet be healed. That two-tier wound may not yet be healed over there. I'll stay away from that line. I'm sorry. I apologize for the sensitivity.

I want to say to the honourable member that, firstly, with respect to the CEOs of Ontario hospitals, they continue to be in our province among the most highly accomplished public officials, and we're very grateful for the work that they do every single day. I have so many opportunities to address that to them personally, and I appreciate one further opportunity.

With respect to value for money, I'll just remind the honourable member that he was a part of the government that was very pleased to pay the Minister of Health's communications adviser \$300,000, which is, on an annual basis, some quite extraordinary amount of money.

Mr Klees: This minister still fails to understand he is now the minister, that they are now the government. What we're talking about here is the issue of competency and trustworthiness. The fact is they promised that they would do things differently. The fact is they're not. In fact, what they are doing is calling into question the very principles that this Premier said he would bring to this government, and that's transparency. All I'm saying is, be transparent. The Premier refused to say that he would bring this contract before the committee for review. What is so difficult about that?

With regard to the minister, he's refused to answer my question: Why did you not tender this contract? Simple.

Hon Mr Smitherman: I'm pleased, by way of continuance from my earlier answer, to remind the honourable member that we're the party that has reappointed 279 Tories to a variety of boards. The fact of the matter is, I find it interesting—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

Hon Mr Smitherman: On the matter that the honourable member asked about with respect to transparency, at the media event where we announced Ms Caplan's appointment, a question was asked directly from the media: How much will this cost, and what is Ms Caplan being paid?

The questions were answered in a very clear fashion. The total cost for this expedited review, which will last no longer than six months, to address what for many people in our province is a very pressing challenge, will be no more than \$500,000. On a \$1.3-billion line item in our government's budget, we feel that's an appropriate expenditure.

Further, as I would look to find people of accomplishment to assist me with difficult challenges, I am enormously pleased that someone of Ms Caplan's extraordinary capabilities and relevance as a former health minister and a parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Health in Ottawa—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a question to the Minister of Health.

Minister, your ministry recently approved a request from the Sudbury Regional Hospital to discharge and transfer long-term-care patients outside our region. This is because there are no long-term-care beds available in our communities. So up to about 20 patients are going to end up going to Manitoulin Island, Espanola and, indeed, even to Chapleau.

We've been contacted by many family members who are very concerned, because they're already going to the

hospital every day to provide additional support. This, of course, is going to be impossible when these patients are discharged and relocated so far from home.

The media reported last week that about 3,700 new long-term-care beds will be allocated this year, but none are coming to Sudbury. I'm asking you, Minister, if you would immediately review this situation to determine if, indeed, some of those long-term-care beds can be allocated to Sudbury so this difficult situation doesn't become a permanent situation.

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I do want to thank the member for the question. The member from Sudbury has also been very clear in advocating on behalf of the needs of his constituents.

Let me make very clear that the situation with respect to those discharge policies is a very challenging one. For those families, I recognize that it's a long distance from Sudbury to Manitoulin Island and other environments, and I want to say that we recognize that this is a policy that can only be put in place in extraordinary circumstances. What are the extraordinary circumstances? There are two points.

1530

The first is that if we do not have these discharge policies, the Sudbury hospital will not function properly and it will back up and cause even more challenges. It is a request that's being made of those families. I recognize that it's a difficult one but it is necessary to try to maintain proper functioning of the health care system. The challenge we have in northern Ontario is that in Timmins we had this problem in July. I think it's quite possible that some of the beds in Sudbury are occupied by people from Timmins who have also been subjected to this.

I'll have more information for the honourable member in the second supplementary.

Ms Martel: My question was about an immediate review of the long-term-care bed allocation. I hope the minister is going to respond to that because there may be some beds that could come to Sudbury. I understand that's not an immediate solution, but it might stave off a very permanent problem.

There are some other measures that I am going to ask you to implement, measures that you actually implemented in Timmins-James Bay that did keep some of these people from having to go to Iroquois Falls, Hearst and other places. Those measures include establishing temporary long-term-care beds in existing facilities in Sudbury; establishing temporary long-term-care beds at the Sudbury Regional Hospital; providing additional funds for palliative care so that people could be cared for at home and not in the hospital; and finally, some additional resources to community-based agencies to do assessments earlier on the advice, for example, of a physician who sees a caregiver who is going to burn out, which is going to result in an immediate admission to the hospital.

Are you prepared, Minister, to do the review, as I asked in the earlier question, and also to implement those

four measures that you did implement earlier this summer in Timmins-James Bay?

Hon Mr Smitherman: We did implement some of those measures in Timmins-James Bay. Perhaps you said that. I'm sorry; I misspoke.

To the member I'll say that yes, generally speaking there's a lot there. In our allocation of long-term care last week we have included funding for 500 temporary alternate-level-of-care beds. That's exactly what's to be applied in the circumstance the member has at hand.

The bigger issue we have is a northern Ontario challenge. It's a problem in Timmins, it's a problem in Thunder Bay and it's now most certainly a problem in Sudbury. The previous government's allocations have not been adequate to meet the needs of people in northern Ontario who have very serious underlying health conditions—lack of caregivers, in some instances. We have already increased the funding that will give more access to palliative care and other strategies through community-based agencies.

On the central matter at hand, which is short-term allocation to deal with the problem, this is something that the ministry is currently examining. Longer-term allocation is of course the priority that we're making to resolve this issue, not on a temporary basis but on a more permanent one.

In the meantime, I do again want to say to the honourable member, and to those families that are disadvantaged as a result of this, that we are asking a lot of them, and we're very appreciative of the efforts they're going to be asked to make for the proper functioning of the health care system.

ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES LEGISLATION

Mr Tony C. Wong (Markham): My question is directed to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

Minister, last week I attended a fundraiser in Markham for a local group called Spirit of Life. Working with other community leaders in Markham, I helped to create this group several months ago.

Spirit of Life was established to raise awareness about the needs of individuals with visible and invisible disabilities, to eliminate barriers and to improve the quality of life for individuals with special needs. Simple things that most of us take for granted, like going to work or grocery shopping, become difficult tasks for 1.5 million Ontarians with a visible or invisible disability. I believe that all Ontarians should have the opportunity to learn, work, play and otherwise participate in society to their fullest potential. Unfortunately, many continue to be left behind.

My question is, how will the new Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act improve life for Ontarians who suffer from visible and invisible disabilities?

Hon Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): The member summarized very well what

we heard across the province from people with disabilities, visible and invisible.

First, this legislation will cover both visible and invisible disabilities, which is a major step forward. The second is that we will have standards.

What we heard across the province was, "What are the rules?" Businesses asked us, "We would follow the rules if we knew what they were; what are the rules? What should we be doing to help people have accessibility to our business?" The business sector will be right there at the sector tables developing those mandatory standards that will allow people to go to restaurants and cinemas more freely and to do everything that we take for granted.

As well, there's a lot of discrimination presently in the employment sector against those with invisible or mental health disabilities. Those are the standards that will take longer to develop—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Thank you.

Hon Mrs Bountrogianni: —because public education needs to be part of that. I'll continue in the supplementary.

Mr Wong: With the changing demographics, we all know that tomorrow's workplace and marketplace will look and function very differently from today. With an aging population, 20% of Ontarians are likely to be persons with a disability by 2025. This group represents an estimated spending power of about \$25 billion a year across Canada. Doing nothing hurts everybody, both businesses and individuals. Minister, how will the new act assist businesses to prepare for the special needs of this significant consumer group?

Hon Mrs Bountrogianni: Indeed, we can't afford not to act. The honourable member is correct. One in five of us will have a disability in 20 years, largely due to the fact that we are aging. The baby boomers never were satisfied with the status quo, to their credit, and they won't be in 20 years either.

One of the ways we will be assisting businesses is by having flexibility. We will not be expecting the same sort of standards for a corner store that is struggling as compared to a Loblaws or a Sobeys, which of course will have more resources for developing standards.

The bottom line is this: that every person with a disability, whether it's invisible or visible, has a right to attend cinemas, to buy milk at the corner store, to go to hotels and other hospitals.

In the United States, by increasing accessibility, the tourism industry raised revenues by 12%. We have a great opportunity here to raise revenues in our province, at the same time doing the right thing in giving the accessibility to Ontarians with disabilities that they deserve.

MINISTERS' INTEGRITY

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): I had intended to ask this question to the Minister of Health, but rather, I will put it directly to the Premier.

Premier, earlier in question period you were asked whether you thought it was appropriate to have a Liberal political staffer, paid for by the taxpayers, in charge of stakeholder relations, someone who is in essence the gatekeeper to public appointments for the Minister of Health, at 4:30 being the gatekeeper and at 5:30 shaking people down to buy tickets to Liberal Party fundraisers. I want to ask you very clearly, do you think that type of behaviour reaches the ethical standards in Dalton McGuinty's government?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): Again, if there are some specifics that the member would like to provide me or possibly the Integrity Commissioner with, I would be delighted to entertain those. But I can say once again that this individual is not employed by the Ministry of Health. I also understand that he never served in this capacity, as manager of stakeholder relations.

Mr Baird: I listened with great interest when you answered the question of the Leader of the Opposition at prompting from the Minister of Health. In fact, this individual was on June 30 e-mailing people in the health care community, shaking them down for political contributions to the Ontario Liberal Party, and in fact didn't leave office—what the minister didn't tell you is that they didn't leave his employ until September 3 of this past year. So what he was doing was that at 4:30 he was the community liaison, an assistant in your political minister's office, being the gatekeeper, giving out public appointments and being the gatekeeper for that process. At 4:30 he was doing that, while at 5:30 he was shaking down members of the health care community for donations to the Ontario Liberal Party.

I want to ask you very clearly, do you have standards that you will stand in your place and tell your cabinet what your ethical bottom line is? Yes or no, Minister.

Hon Mr McGuinty: Yes, we have standards, and yes, they are much higher than those set by our predecessor government.

HOME CARE

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): My question is to the Minister of Health. Mr Minister, you promised during the last election, and indeed since the last election, to improve home care services. I have to tell you that we in East York do not see much happening in that way.

Just in this past couple of weeks we have seen that our treasured community-based not-for-profit agency, Community Care East York, has been nudged out by a multinational company because the bidding process was flawed. You have admitted that the bidding process is flawed. You have hired people to study that process. Why will you not include Community Care East York and perhaps the Ottawa VON in that study and remedy something which is very wrong?

1540

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): The honourable member asks me to

seek a remedy which is to reach back into a legally constituted process and change it because the outcome didn't satisfy him or some members of his community. I think it's important to note that we do have concerns about the competitive bidding process as it relates to the community care access centres and provision of long-term care. That's why we've taken the actions that we have. But for the member to suggest that we have the power to retroactively reach in and change those outcomes I think is inappropriate.

Further, in many of these very same processes, including the one in Ottawa, the big winners, if you will, of those contracts that were tendered are in fact not-for-profit organizations. So I think the member should be careful in suggesting that it's for-profit providers that have won out in instances over those that are not-for-profit.

Our concern in taking on this review of the process by Elinor Caplan is that it is designed to create stronger levels of continuity of care for both patients and providers, because we have been concerned about the upheaval the process has been causing to date.

I just want to say to the member with respect to the situation in East York and some other places that he might have referenced, of course we have no power to reach in arbitrarily and change decisions that were arrived at in a legal process.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Supplementary.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I'm going to tell you right now that you'd better find a way to reach back in and fix the mess you've made in my community of East York. It is unacceptable. The review of how contracts are being awarded is too late for our constituents in East York. You ran on "Choose change," but you did not stop the cutthroat Tory process that gives contracts to for-profit outfits rather than proven, non-profit community-based home care providers like Community Care East York. These residents are set to lose the home care workers that they let into their homes and that they know and trust. I'm going to ask you to fix this. Will you make the review retroactive to January so that Community Care East York and providers like the VON and others can continue to deliver the excellent home care services they provide to my constituents in East York?

Hon Mr Smitherman: I believe I've already answered that part of the member's question. I will take this opportunity to mention that what we are doing is building a system that will work even better in the future. The fact of the matter is that we put \$103 million in additional funding into home care this year and it is providing extraordinary new benefits to people. In fact, over the four-year mandate we've already indicated that funding will be increasing and an additional 96,000 people will benefit from home care, the kind of care that's delivered right in their home. I believe we can improve this process and make it better from the standpoint of continuity of care for workers and patients alike, and that's the path we're on right now.

The Speaker: That brings us to the end of question period.

PETITIONS

WATERLOO-WELLINGTON TRANSPORTATION ACTION PLAN

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the residents of Waterloo-Wellington need and deserve excellent roads and highways for their safe travel; and

"Whereas good transportation links are vital to the strength of our local economy, supporting job creation through the efficient delivery of our products to the North American marketplace; and

"Whereas transit services are essential to managing the future growth of our urban communities and have a relatively minimal impact on our natural environment; and

"Whereas Waterloo-Wellington MPP Ted Arnott has asked all municipalities in Waterloo-Wellington to provide him with their top transportation priorities for the next five years and beyond, all of them responded, and their recommendations form the Waterloo-Wellington transportation action plan; and

"Whereas the Waterloo-Wellington transportation action plan contains over 40 recommendations provided to MPP Ted Arnott by municipalities, and there is recurrent support for implementing the corridor study of Highway 7/8 between Kitchener and Stratford, a new four-lane Highway 7 from Kitchener to Guelph, assistance for Wellington county to rebuild Highway 24 from Guelph to Cambridge, a repaired and upgraded Highway 6 from Fergus to Mount Forest, Waterloo region's light rail transit initiative, OSTAR funding for transportation-related projects, and other projects;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the provincial government support Ted Arnott's Waterloo-Wellington transportation action plan, and initiate the necessary studies and/or construction of the projects in it."

I have affixed my signature as well to this petition.

OPTOMETRISTS

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I've got a petition to the Ontario Legislature.

"Whereas the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario will be considering a private member's bill that aims to amend the Optometry Act to give optometrists the authority to prescribe therapeutic pharmaceutical agents for the treatment of certain eye diseases; and

"Whereas optometrists are highly trained and equipped with the knowledge and specialized instrumentation needed to effectively diagnose and treat certain eye problems; and

"Whereas extending the authority to prescribe TPAs to optometrists will help relieve the demands on ophthalmologists and physicians who currently have the exclusive domain for prescribing TPAs to optometry patients; and

"Whereas the bill introduced by New Democrat Peter Kormos ... will ensure that patients receive prompt, timely, one-stop care where appropriate;

"Therefore, I do support the bill proposing an amendment to the Optometry Act to give optometrists the authority to prescribe therapeutic pharmaceutical agents for the treatment of certain eye diseases and I urge the government of Ontario to ensure speedy passage of the bill."

It's signed by hundreds. I've affixed my signature as well. Page Anthony is taking this to the Clerk.

EYE EXAMINATIONS

Mr Kim Craiton (Niagara Falls): I'm pleased to present this petition on behalf of my riding of Niagara Falls.

"Whereas the 2004 provincial budget was not clear on whether adult optometry patients who have or who are at risk for medical conditions, such as diabetes, glaucoma, macular degeneration and clinically significant cataracts would continue to be covered through the Ontario Health Insurance Plan; and

"Whereas Ontario's optometrists strongly feel that Ontario seniors, those under 20 and those with chronic sight-threatening diseases must continue to receive primary eye care services directly from Ontario's optometrists; and

"Whereas forcing patients to be referred to optometrists through their family physicians ignores the years of specialized training optometrists undertake to detect, diagnose and treat eye conditions; and

"Whereas almost 140 communities across the province have already been designated as underserved for family practitioners and the government's approach will only exacerbate the problem unnecessarily;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care immediately clarify that the eye examination services they provide to patients at risk for medical conditions will continue to be covered by OHIP and the coverage for these services is not dependent on a patient being referred to an optometrist by a family physician."

I'm pleased to submit that with my signature attached.

KINGSTON STOCKYARDS

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I have a petition here signed by a great number of residents of Ontario.

"Whereas the Canadian (and Ontario) beef industry has been in turmoil since the spring of 2003 when an isolated case of BSE (which did not reach the food chain) was reported in Alberta resulting in the closure of the US border to Canadian beef exports; and

"Whereas since that time losses to farmers and their related suppliers such as livestock markets have been in the billions of dollars; and

"Whereas there is no immediate solution for the problem, which would cure the economic tragedy and stabilize the economics of the industry and its suppliers; and

"Whereas livestock markets in Ontario are in imminent danger of being closed, and in fact one of Ontario's major markets for two generations, Lindsay Sale Barn, has in fact closed its doors as of September 2004; and

"Whereas farmers who are already devastated by the evolution of this crisis to date need community livestock sales in order to have a place to sell their stock; and

"Whereas the Kingston community stockyards—the only remaining livestock market between Ottawa and Campbellford—is in immediate danger of closing for good, creating significant hardship for both the operators and the farming community who require this sale;

"Be it resolved, therefore, that we, the supporters of the Kingston Stockyards, hereby petition the Legislature to provide immediate financial relief for this facility through this crisis so that it can continue to serve the community."

I add my signature to it, as I totally agree with it.

HEALTH CARE SERVICES

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a petition sent to me by Mr Maurice Lalonde of Whitefish, Ontario—it's in my riding—and I thank him for it. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberal government is cutting provincial funding for essential health care services like optometry, physiotherapy and chiropractic care;

"Whereas this privatization of health care services will force Ontarians to pay out of pocket for essential health care;

"Whereas Ontarians already pay for health care through their taxes and will be forced to pay even more through the government's new regressive health tax;

"Whereas the Liberals promised during the election that they would not cut or privatize health care services in Ontario;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We demand the McGuinty Liberal government keep its promises and guarantee adequate provincial funding for critical health services like eye, physiotherapy and chiropractic care."

I agree with the petitioners.

1550

GO TRANSIT SERVICE

Mr Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly from the Lisgar Residents' Association at their most recent annual general meeting.

"Whereas the city of Mississauga has, within a generation, grown from a linked collection of suburban and farming communities into Canada's sixth-largest city, and tens of thousands of people daily need to commute into and out of Mississauga in order to do business, educate themselves and their families and enjoy culture and recreation; and

"Whereas gridlock on all roads leading into and out of Mississauga makes peak period road commuting impractical, and commuter rail service on the Milton GO line is restricted to morning and afternoon service into and out of Toronto; and

"Whereas residents of western Mississauga need to commute to commute, driving along traffic-clogged roads to get to overflowing parking lots at the Meadowvale, Streetsville and Erindale GO train stations;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario, through the Ministry of Transportation and highways, instruct GO Transit to allocate sufficient resources from its 2004-05 capital budget to proceed immediately with the acquisition of land and construction of a new GO train station called Lisgar at Tenth Line and the rail tracks to alleviate the parking congestion and provide better access to GO train service on the Milton line for residents of western Mississauga."

As one of those Lisgar residents, I'm pleased to affix my name.

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Mrs Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need; and

"Whereas those with reduced ability to pay, including seniors, low-income families and the working poor, will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments; and

"Whereas the elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures in chiropractic treatment and cost the government over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

"Whereas there was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP

coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province."

I have several hundred petitions, and I'm pleased to sign my name.

LANDFILL

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): [Inaudible] site 41 is still a battle.

"Whereas the county of Simcoe proposes to construct a landfill at site 41 in the township of Tiny; and

"Whereas the county of Simcoe has received, over a period of time, the necessary approvals from the Ministry of the Environment to design and construct a landfill at site 41; and

"Whereas, as part of the landfill planning process, peer reviews of site 41 identified over 200 recommendations for improvements to the design, most of which are related to potential groundwater contamination; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has on numerous occasions stated her passion for clean and safe water and the need for water source protection; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has indicated her intention to introduce legislation on water source protection, which is a final and key recommendation to be implemented under Justice Dennis O'Connor's report on the Walkerton inquiry; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has announced expert panels that will make recommendations to the minister on water source protection legislation; and

"Whereas the Ministry of the Environment will now be responsible for policing nutrient management; and

"Whereas the citizens of Ontario will be expecting a standing committee of the Legislature to hold province-wide public hearings on water source protection legislation;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the government of Ontario and the Ministry of the Environment to immediately place a moratorium on the development of site 41 until the water source protection legislation is implemented in Ontario. We believe the legislation will definitely affect the design of site 41 and the nearby water sources."

I'm pleased to sign my name to this.

OPTOMETRISTS

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a petition that has been sent to me by the Ontario optometrists' association. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the last funding agreement between the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and the Ontario Association of Optometrists ... expired March 31, 2000; and

"Whereas the optometric fees for OHIP-insured services remain unchanged since 1989; and

"Whereas the lack of any fee increase for 15 years has created a crisis situation for optometrists; and

"Whereas fees for OHIP services do not provide for fair or reasonable compensation for the professional services of optometrists, in that they no longer cover the costs of providing eye examinations; and

"Whereas it is in the best interests of patients and the government to have a new funding agreement for insured services that will ensure that the most vulnerable members of society are able to receive the eye care they need;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care resume negotiations immediately with the OAO and appoint a mediator to help with the negotiation process in order to ensure that optometrists can continue to provide quality eye care services to patients in Ontario."

I agree with the petitioners and I've signed my signature to this.

GOVERNMENT DEFICITS

Mr Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the Dalton McGuinty government inherited a fiscal mess in the province of Ontario;

"Whereas the government undertook an unprecedented budget consultation with the people of Ontario;

"Whereas tough choices and small sacrifices need to be made today for a stronger Ontario tomorrow; and

"Whereas the Minister of Finance and the Dalton McGuinty government tabled a responsible four-year plan to address this deficit, improve health care and education, inspire economic growth and balance the budget;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"To support the Dalton McGuinty government's responsible four-year plan and to support legislation that ensures outgoing governments cannot hide deficits again."

I've affixed my signature to this petition.

LESLIE M. FROST CENTRE

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I have a large number of petitions to reopen the Leslie M. Frost Centre.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Leslie M. Frost Centre has been Ontario's leading natural resources education, training and conference centre aimed at fostering an understanding of natural resource management, with a focus on ecosystems and their sustainability for future generations; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government refused to consult with municipalities and other user groups before taking this drastic action and continues to operate in a clandestine manner; and

"Whereas this move will hurt the people and economies of Muskoka and Haliburton, especially those in the local tourism industry; and

"Whereas the Frost Centre is a valuable resource for elementary, secondary, post-secondary institutions, as well as a variety of other groups;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government reverse the decision to close the Leslie M. Frost Centre, allowing valuable summer programs to continue while a long-term solution is developed."

I support this petition.

HEALTH CARE SERVICES

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a petition that's been signed by many hundreds of residents in my riding and the Sudbury riding. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberal government is cutting provincial funding for essential health care services like optometry, physiotherapy and chiropractic care;

"Whereas this privatization of health care services will force Ontarians to pay out-of-pocket for essential health care;

"Whereas Ontarians already pay for health care through their taxes and will be forced to pay even more through the government's new regressive health tax;

"Whereas the Liberals promised during the election that they would not cut or privatize health care services in Ontario;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We demand the McGuinty Liberal government keep its promises and guarantee adequate provincial funding for critical health services like eye, physiotherapy and chiropractic care."

I agree with the petitioners and I've affixed my signature to this.

IMMIGRANTS' SKILLS

Mr Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): I have a petition regarding access to trades and professions in Ontario. It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario enjoys the continuing benefit of the contributions of men and women who choose to leave their country of origin in order to settle in Canada, raise their families, educate their children and pursue their livelihoods and careers; and

"Whereas newcomers to Canada who choose to settle in Ontario find frequent and unnecessary obstacles that prevent skilled tradespeople, professional and managerial talent, from practising the professions, trades and occupations for which they have been trained in their country of origin; and

"Whereas Ontario, its businesses, its people and its institutions badly need the professional, managerial and

technical skills that many newcomers to Canada have and want to use;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the government of Ontario, through the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities and the other institutions and agencies of and within the government of Ontario, undertake specific and proactive measures to work with the bodies regulating access to Ontario’s professions, trades and other occupations in order that newcomers to Canada gain fair, timely and cost-effective access to certification and other measures to facilitate the entry or re-entry of skilled workers and professionals trained outside Canada into the Canadian workforce.”

1600

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUDGET MEASURES ACT, 2004 (NO. 2)

LOI DE 2004

SUR LES MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES (N^O 2)

Mr Sorbara moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 106, An Act to implement Budget measures and amend the Crown Forest Sustainability Act, 1994 / Projet de loi 106, Loi mettant en oeuvre certaines mesures budgétaires et modifiant la Loi de 1994 sur la durabilité des forêts de la Couronne.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Minister?

Applause.

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): That’s very kind of you.

It’s an honour and a privilege to be the first speaker as we resume sitting in this Legislature on this gorgeous, marvellous fall afternoon.

I should say that I am going to be sharing my time on this bill with my parliamentary assistant, the member from Eglinton-Lawrence, who is noted for being an outstanding advocate on a variety of things. He may be talking about mortgage broker stuff—it’s one of the things he’s working on—but I’ll leave that up to him.

Before I get to the substance of the bill, I thought I might just welcome the member from Whitby-Ajax as the critic in his party for things relating to finance and to congratulate him on his contesting, once again, the leadership of his party. He and I disagree fundamentally on political philosophies and approaches to ensuring the vibrancy of Ontario and the flourishing of its economy. But I want to say to him, in all sincerity, that I’ve contested a leadership, and it is exhilarating and it is exhausting. That he would, over the course of less than two years, I think, contest the leadership of his party twice I think is a statement of his dedication to his own party and to the province as a whole. That’s the last nice thing I’m going to say about him, OK? That’s it. Now the gloves are off.

By the way, although he’s not here, my own MPP, the member from Oak Ridges, was a contestant there as well. I got to listen to all of his speech the night of the convention and I thought he spoke eloquently. I have no idea why he’s out there advocating a two-tier health care system, which would not only cost the people of Ontario more money for their health care but significantly reduce the quality of health care for the vast majority of the population who cannot afford to pay the kinds of bills that he’s advocating. But those are politics that belong to the member from Oak Ridges and the member from Whitby-Ajax and that party.

While I’m at it, I want to welcome John Tory as the leader of the party. He’s the invisible presence in this chamber. The question that we’re all betting on is, who is going to resign to make room for Mr Tory to contest a seat in this Legislature? I want to end any rumour that it’s going to be Michael Prue of the NDP. I don’t know who started that rumour, but surely that can’t be true.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Sorbara: If you haven’t heard one by noon—

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I heard otherwise.

Hon Mr Sorbara: OK, there you go. I think my friend from Sudbury knows what’s behind that story.

I would like to say a few things about what has happened in Ontario during the period when this House was not sitting. It has been, in some sense, a tremendous summer—certainly economically. The economy has been very strong in Ontario. We are still looking for a next level of achievement in tourism. We’re still not happy with the number of visitors we’re getting, particularly from south of the border, and we’re working on those initiatives. I want to send out a general welcome. It’s beautiful in Ontario this fall. Come and see us, come and join us, come and celebrate with us.

Within that, I want to say a few words about the other part of the summer, in particular about the tragedies associated with the flooding in Peterborough on July 15. The member from Peterborough is sitting directly behind me. I’m sure he’ll have an opportunity in this Legislature to speak about that and the real-life stories of people who basically lost everything and the extent to which nature just ravaged that community so severely.

I must tell you that I was incredibly proud of how quickly our government was able to respond to the needs of the people of Peterborough and the surrounding area. To me, it was one of the proudest moments of the summer. I don’t want to embarrass my friend from Peterborough, but part of the quickness of that response was his advocacy to our government and our caucus that this was not a time to study and this was not a time to do accounting; this was a time that the people of his community needed help from their provincial government. He did it eloquently, he did it forcefully and he did it successfully. I think it stands as a measure of emergency response from now on in this province and, indeed, in this country.

I want to say a word as well about one of the major meetings of the summer, the AMO meeting, the

Association of Municipalities of Ontario, and the way in which a new level of co-operation really has been developed between municipalities and the provincial government. In fact, the convention really wound up with an accountability session. I think there were some 10 or 12 ministers from our government there to answer questions from a variety of municipal leaders.

What was really touching to me was the conversations after the accountability session from municipal officials elected from right across Ontario, the same refrain, and that was, "There is a new era of co-operation and consideration in this province." The era of confrontation, the era of name-calling, the era of "you said/he said/she said/they said" is over. I hope we can continue that approach, to work in partnership with our municipal partners to build a stronger Ontario, right from communities in the very far north down to Windsor, over to Kingston, to Cornwall and right across this great province.

The other thing that I think is really of note during the summer is the events that took place in Ottawa from September 13 to 15 in the health care summit that the Prime Minister called, bringing all provinces and territories together to work out what he was suggesting needed to be the deal for a decade in health care.

I had the opportunity and the honour of participating in that meeting during the course of the three days and to offer what little advice might be helpful to the Premier. I don't need to go into the details of the agreement. People describe it as an \$18-billion deal over six years that will transform health care. I should tell you that, beyond the actual figures and the numbers—because it doesn't fix everything in Ontario—what was really important about that health care summit, what stands out beyond everything else, is that it represented this country coming together once again to reconfirm its profound commitment to a universal, publicly funded health care system from sea to sea to sea. That's really what happened. All the naysayers, people like my friend from Oak Ridges, who say, "It can't work any more. We need private health care. We need a US model. We need a Soviet model. We need some other model," were all proven wrong by what happened in Ottawa among the leaders of governments in Canada, not only agreeing upon the financial details of a deal but reconfirming our collective commitment to a system based on need and not based on wealth.

I want to tell you how incredibly proud I was of the work our Premier, the member from Ottawa South, Dalton McGuinty, did, the role he played in those negotiations. They were not easy. When the going really got rough—and I was there, so I can testify to this—it was the Premier of Ontario who kept tempers down and kept Premiers and the Prime Minister around the table. When it would have been politically easy for people to bolt and say, "We just can't do a deal here," it was the Premier of Ontario, understanding that this was a matter of urgent national interest, who got people to keep talking. Some of those meetings went on well into the

night. I should tell you how proud I was that officials from my own ministry, the Ministry of Finance, were there to do all the number-crunching and to do a careful analysis of the proposals that various participants in the conference were putting forward. The work of officials from my ministry deserves recognition and deserves to be honoured. I want to take this opportunity to congratulate them. But that health care deal really represents a new and deeper commitment to the thing that binds us all together as Canadians, and that is a universal health care system.

I do want to say a word about the details in Bill 106. Obviously, the bill is pretty simple and straightforward. The major part of it deals with the implementation of the Ontario health premium, certainly—no doubt, no argument—the most controversial part of the budget that we as a government brought forward on May 18.

1610

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): No doubt about that.

Hon Mr Sorbara: There's my friend from the east end of Toronto, Toronto-Danforth. It's good to see an NDP member here, though, and more; it's great. They're coming in for the heart of the speech, no doubt the most controversial part of the budget. I want to tell you, Speaker, and the members of this House that we did not take lightly the decision to introduce the Ontario health premium as a specialized tax in Ontario to help us pay for the cost of health care in this great province. I want to put on the record here, to my friend for Toronto-Danforth, that the alternative was to say, "Okay, we said that there would be absolutely no new taxes; we won't do this, so we will allow Ontario to continue down the debt spiral that the previous government left us with when they left power on October 23." That was simply not acceptable.

Ms Churley: Gerry Phillips knew there was a deficit of over \$5 billion.

Hon Mr Sorbara: I tell my friend from Toronto-Danforth that she will have her turn in this debate, I hope, because I'm always impressed with her analysis of public issues. I rarely agree with her but I'm impressed with the work she puts into it.

That health care premium represents the revenues that will help us bring new stability to the balance sheet of this province. There's no doubt it would have been easier in some respects to say, "You know what? We won't bring in the premium, so we have to start cutting services and closing schools; can't keep the promises in education, in health care or in public transportation." That's what the NDP would want and certainly that's what the Conservatives would want.

But what the people of Ontario elected us to do, and what we have done over the past year, is to start to transform for the better the public services in this province. Bill 106 gives us the opportunity to further that agenda by way of revenues that, as we said when we introduced the bill, will be dedicated exclusively and entirely to improving the health care system. We've already gone down that road with more nurses and with

improvements already to home care. We are starting to transform the delivery of primary care and we are starting to transform the way in which people access our health care system. Bill 106 gives us the resources we need to do that.

In closing, I want to say to you that I hope you've had a good summer. I know from chatting with many of the members around this Legislature that they have heard the same refrain no matter where they are reporting from around the province, that we're starting to feel the real, positive benefits of the real, positive changes that the people of Ontario expected from this government and are now getting.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. I recognize the member for Eglinton-Lawrence.

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): It's my honour to follow the Minister of Finance in regard to the debate on Bill 106. I would like to continue on some of the comments the minister made.

I certainly want to congratulate all the people in Peterborough who over the summer witnessed an amazing act of climate change that was considered a 300-year storm. It's bad enough that they had a 100-year storm two years earlier; this time they had a 300-year storm. I think it's a credit to the leadership of the local Peterborough council, Mayor Sutherland, all the citizens of Peterborough, the Peterborough BIA and our own colleague here, Jeff Leal, the member from Peterborough, who really quietly and in a very sure-handed way took care of an extremely complex and challenging situation. I think all of Ontario would like to appreciate the good work that was done during that most trying period on July 15 in the city of Peterborough.

Also, the minister mentioned that an integral part of Ontario's economic growth and stability depends on tourism. I see my colleague from Muskoka sitting here. I think it's critically important for Ontarians to talk about the wonderful, spectacular and absolutely beautiful colours that we can see throughout Ontario, especially this week and next week. Somebody mentioned that Manitoulin is spectacular, Muskoka, the Agawa Canyon and up in Simcoe; you can go to almost any corner of this great province and see the amazing cornucopia of colours that is not matched, I think, virtually anywhere in North America. I think we Ontarians sometimes don't blow our own horn enough or boost our province and its spectacular natural beauty enough. I think if we tend to appreciate the natural beauty of this province, it will not only encourage Ontarians to vacation and travel throughout Ontario but will also encourage people from the nearby states to the south to come to Ontario and enjoy a wonderful view of these spectacular exhibits and colours of nature. Anybody who wants to do something worthwhile with their children this weekend, and with seniors, what better way but to spend a weekend or a day driving in one of those beautiful parts of Ontario: Agawa Canyon, Manitoulin, the Bruce Trail; anywhere you go there is a spectacular exhibiting of nature's mysteries and glory.

The minister talked about what went on this summer. We had the Peterborough flood. Also, I was interested to travel through parts of northern Ontario that are rarely talked about—the James Bay basin, where we had public hearings on the First Nations revenue-sharing bill put forward by the member from James Bay, Mr Gilles Bisson. It's interesting to see another part of Ontario which is, again, sometimes unheralded, like Pickle Lake, where they say there's some of the best fishing. I only caught a small, three-pound pike.

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): It's that big.

Mr Colle: How big was that pike in Pickle Lake? It's the biggest fish I've caught in my life. That's all I can say. I think it was about this big, and the member from Muskoka is my witness. But whether it's Pickle Lake or Sioux Lookout, which is a really interesting communications hub—the Chairman, our good friend here from Chatham-Kent, Mr Hoy, was there. We visited Attawapiskat, which is a very fascinating First Nations community. We also went to Moose Factory, which has an incredible place called the Ecolodge. The whole economy of Moose Factory and Moosonee and that area depends on people coming there from all over the world. They come to see the polar bears and they come to see the spectacular part of the province in Moosonee and Moose Factory.

1620

Interjections.

Mr Colle: I know the members opposite sometimes don't put any value on that part of Ontario. But I, as a member from Toronto, appreciate the fact that it's all the component parts of Ontario that make Ontario's economy strong. Ontario's economy cannot be strong with just Toronto's economy doing well by itself. We have to have a strong economy in Moose Factory, we have to have a strong economy in Nepean, we have to have a strong economy in Chatham-Kent and Cornwall, from east to west.

That's why this budget—and Bill 106 is part of that budget—paid a lot of attention to northern Ontario and tried to explain in budgetary fashion the fact that we have to invest in all of Ontario for Ontario to create jobs and opportunities for young people.

That's what budget Bill 106 is really all about. It is part of a comprehensive plan to ensure that there's enough investment in this great province so that there is continued job creation, continued investment in health care, continued investment in education, continued investment in our urban and rural infrastructure. This kind of investment cannot take place unless there are tough decisions made in a budget. As we all know, we made some very difficult decisions, as all previous governments have made when it comes to a budget. Budgets are not easy, because you essentially have to say no to certain demands, and on the other hand, you have to make tough choices.

We introduced the health premium. The health premium was an attempt to say very plainly to the people

of Ontario that it isn't just going to go on, business as usual, in terms of funding health care. Health care in Ontario is really in the dynamics of a supply-and-demand situation that requires extraordinary attention. I know the Minister of Health is giving it extraordinary attention, and so is the Minister of Finance, because now health is essentially half of the provincial budget and growing at about 7% to 8% a year and more. The cost of drugs is growing at almost 15% a year.

Over and over again we hear the reference to the baby boomers and the blip coming, where by the year 2020 the impact on health is even going to be double what it is today by the growing number of baby boomers who will make up more and more of the senior population. So in this budget we tried to address that need, saying, "You need more revenues to provide essential health services and to meet the demand that's prevalent in every community," whether it's in the city of Vaughan, where they're looking for a new hospital, or whether it's in Brampton, where they're looking for a new hospital, or whether they need more cardiac care in hospitals in Chatham-Kent.

This budget tries to say that with this health premium we're able to invest in some of those critical services: cardiac procedures, chemotherapy. Which one of us has not had a call from a mother or father saying they have a loved one who needs that chemotherapy speeded up, that it's not soon enough, that there's too much of a wait time? People are very anxious for their loved ones as they wait for those necessary surgeries.

In this budget, we tried to say that rather than have people wait and wait in line for hip replacements or for cardiac treatment or for cataract operations for the elderly, we are going to try to use that money from the health premiums—and it starts at about \$60 a year if you're earning about \$21,000 and works its way up, based on income, all the way to \$900 for the highest income earners. In fact, it's the only premium in Canada that's based on income. Nobody likes to pay a health premium. Nobody likes to pay taxes. We know that. But we're saying that the choices are pretty stark. Do we tell the people waiting for cardiac procedures, "Wait for that bypass another three or four months"? Do we tell that person waiting for the cataract operation, a senior, "Wait another year"? Most of us said we can't keep telling people to wait, that as people wait, they get sicker, costing the health system even more. That's why the resources from the health premium will also go into what Minister Smitherman talks about in this transformation approach to health care. In other words, we're not just going to continue to write cheques to the hospitals, we're not going to continue to write cheques to the doctors or cheques to the pharmaceuticals. We're saying we have to start to transform health care investment in the province of Ontario. In other words, we are going to put money into upfront investments that emphasize wellness and prevention.

That's why for the first time in a budget there are specific references to providing immunization for chil-

dren at birth so they won't get smallpox and they won't get these childhood diseases. We're putting in tens of millions of dollars into upfront immunization, saving families about \$600 a year. That's why we're saying we can't just expect the hospital to be the one-stop shopping centre for health care. That's over with. Hospitals cannot do everything for everybody in a community.

That's why the minister is saying we have to shift health care into a prevention mode, into a wellness mode, also into a community-based mode, whether it be the half a billion dollars we're putting into home care, nursing homes or the new family health teams, because in every community we hear it over and over again—in this House for the last eight years we heard it—there are not enough doctors. Whether you go to Ajax or whether you go to Chatham-Kent, certainly if you go to the north, you go to beautiful Brantford, Ontario, Paris, Ontario, wherever you go—to Leamington—they're saying there are no doctors.

Some of that health premium money will go to providing for the financing of these family health teams that will go into communities to provide an alternative to just going to a hospital for everything and work on prevention, nutritional education, lifestyle education, hiring more nurses, all these investments, so it's not always at the doctor's doorstep by himself or herself and not at the hospital emergency room's doorstep.

We have begun to think, perhaps mistakenly, that emergency rooms in hospitals are the intake centres for health care; they're not. They are places of last resort. That's why I'm a big supporter in my own riding of Eglinton-Lawrence of family community health centres. I've got the Anne Johnston centre on Yonge Street. I've got the Lawrence Heights Community Health Centre in the Bathurst-Lawrence area. What they do is take the pressure off our hospitals at a much lower cost. You've got doctors on salary, you've got nutritionists, you've got dieticians, you've got nurses, you've got social workers all working in that community health centre. I think we have 50 in Ontario.

In this budget, we've increased the funding for those community health centres by \$16 million. It's the first time we've had a reinvestment in community health centres in over 10 years. That's another concrete example of the fact that it's not the status quo approach to health care. You'll hear the opposition stand up over and over again and talk about, "Well, you did this. You should have done that." They just don't get it. We can't do things as we've always done for the last 40 years in health care, because basically it will end up where we'll have one ministry. The Honourable George Smitherman will be the only minister left in this government if we continue to increase our expenditures in health care as we have over the last seven or eight years.

Interjection.

Mr Colle: Right. The member from Peterborough says there will be no money for the roads or the GO train services, no money for our schools, no money for all of our essential services, unless we start to transform health care.

The member from Ottawa Centre—I was in his riding last week—I mean, two days ago in Ottawa Centre. I was at the Parkdale market. We were talking about health. You know what I bought? I bought a giant 10-pound bag of carrots, and they actually tasted like real carrots. I know in Toronto our carrots taste like soap. But these were locally grown carrots. I bought a 10-pound bag of carrots, two heads of cauliflower and two broccolis, and they actually smelled like vegetables. The member for Ottawa Centre is a great exponent of healthy living, healthy eating, prevention, the food that you eat, the food that you don't eat. In health care, we can no longer just look upon it as, what do you do after a person gets sick? It's a sickness system. We should look at providing health and nutrition and investing in that in an upfront way through our many different partners in health care, whether it be the hospitals, family health teams or community health centres—our public health system.

1630

In this budget we've made a massive investment in public health. We've already forgotten, almost, what happens if you don't pay attention to public health. That's a perfect illustration of what happens if you don't invest in prevention—penny wise, pound foolish. The Minister of Health has put in a \$190-million investment in public health. Dr Sheela Basrur, one of the great heroines of SARS, is now in charge of public health in Ontario. She's going to make sure that the lessons learned from SARS and other sad events in recent history, like Walkerton, are not repeated—by investing in public health, which means prevention of illness.

That's what public health is. You prevent illness by having people on the ground: the public health nurse available to go to the schools, public health programs of immunization, visiting nurses—all this upfront investment in prevention. Eating right, whether it be the carrots or cauliflower instead of eating—people still sometimes say, "Why are you spending so much time on the junk food in school issue?" That's part of the comprehensive approach we're taking to health care.

One of my friends said the other day that one of her children drinks 10 Cokes a day and smokes to boot. What chance do we have, if a 17-year-old is drinking 10 Cokes a day and smoking, of making sure that young person ever stays healthy? By neglecting those young people, we're going to contribute to type 2 diabetes, which is exploding all over this country. Type 2 diabetes is a result of lifestyle, of the lack of good nutrition, of going to that pop machine, going to that chocolate bar machine, going to the fast food store. That's what costs our health care system billions of dollars. Those are the ways that we can bring down some of these costs. We don't have a choice, because if we want to provide prenatal care, essential chemotherapy, hip replacements and heart surgery or to have doctors in communities, we can't afford to neglect nutrition and prevention. We can't neglect public health. These parts of health care, when neglected, in the long run cost the Ministry of Finance, the taxpayers of Ontario, incredible amounts of money—billions of dollars.

The health care budget, again, is in the range of \$30 billion and counting, and it's going to eat up the hard-earned tax dollars. So the choice is very clear for all of us who are in government or those of us who live in this great province of Ontario: that we make some investments. I call them investments because they're not just spending money. That status quo, old-fashioned, out-of-date approach is gone forever. You have to put health care money in what we call investment envelopes so that we can actually restructure health care so, as I said, it becomes more of a prevention, essential services are provided, hospitals start to become not just one-stop shopping centres but become intermingled with all the different partners in the community; they're not silos by themselves.

These are all possible because we made some very difficult choices in this budget. I think most fair-minded Ontarians have told me very clearly, "We know you had to do some tough things. We know what's happening to costs. We're willing to do our part." Ontarians are generally very fair.

As I go along Eglinton Avenue in my riding, it's a pretty good slice of ordinary Ontario. Eglinton Avenue, for those who don't know, starts on the borders of marvellous Mississauga and then goes across into Etobicoke—I see the member from Etobicoke North there—by the Humber River, and then it goes into York, in the middle of the city of Toronto. It even touches upon North York. It goes through East York even, then Scarborough and toward Durham. Eglinton Avenue cuts across. It's the only major thoroughfare that cuts through all six former municipalities of Toronto. So you get a good slice of what ordinary people are doing—rich, poor, young, old. You can see it all on Eglinton Avenue. Just take the Eglinton Avenue bus one day, and you can see people of all walks of life.

They're saying, "Yes, we have jobs," and they're happy to have jobs. The economy is strong in Ontario, but it's not going to be strong by itself. It needs our steering, it needs our tutelage, to keep this economy going in the right direction. It doesn't happen automatically; it's not on automatic pilot. It takes a lot of work to keep this economy going, and that's the key: When the economy is strong, then we can invest in helping those who may be left behind. I don't think any of us, whether Conservative, NDP or Liberal, wants to leave anybody behind who needs help. That's why this budget tries to say, "We're going to try to do our best to put our hard-earned tax dollars to work to make everybody healthy as much as possible, try to change some attitudes, try to make the system more available to everybody across this great province."

When you make changes, there are a lot of people who say, "I don't like that change. I want it the old way. I want this." They're basically blocking improvements. They don't want to see improvements; they want to just go back. But we can't afford to go back.

The health care budget, 48% of the overall provincial budget—that can't continue. So we've got to find ways

to be smarter, more innovative. We've got to be partnering. This budget enables us to do it with an increased investment, primarily in health care, and that's certainly worth it as far as I'm concerned.

I want to thank everybody for listening and I hope you'll support Bill 106, which is a very straightforward attempt at saying, "Wake up, Ontario. We need to work together to transform health care so our kids and our kids' kids can have public health care—universal, first quality, open to all." That's what this budget continues to invest in, to transform and to, I think, make us stop and say that we have to appreciate what we have or we're going to lose it. We're going to have to appreciate the good things, make them better and move to a new dimension where we're starting to see some real results in getting people better health care, better doctors, better nursing care, and better home care and community care, not just in hospitals.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): It's a pleasure to rise again and welcome everybody back to the Ontario Legislature after a beautiful Thanksgiving weekend. I know it will be a difficult time for the government because there's going to be a lot of explaining to do, and obviously you're going to try the very best you can to satisfy the needs of the people of our province. I think today we began our drive and we're going to deal a lot in the next few months with integrity and honesty and all of those sorts of things, because we already know about the broken promises and that will be a natural as we go toward the year 2007.

1640

I want to say that I have listened with interest to both the minister and his parliamentary assistant. I think it's important to note that they are encountering a lot of the same problems that governments for many decades have encountered in the province of Ontario. It was certainly a different story when you were on this side of the House. We could go back in Hansard and pick out thousands and thousands of quotes that you made about what a terrible job the Conservatives were doing when we were over there, and of course, we'll be doing the same thing to you as we work toward the next election.

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): The difference is that you merited them.

Mr Dunlop: Here is the heckling going on from the assistant Speaker.

Mr Crozier: Deputy.

Mr Dunlop: Deputy Speaker. Sorry.

But there's no question about it. We have a big challenge ahead of us in this province. Both the minister and the parliamentary assistant zeroed in on health care. I don't know how many times we sat over there and said the same thing. The challenges are monumental to maintain this type of system that Ontarians and Canadians expect in this great country. I wish the government all the best in their challenges, because there is no question that it's a big one: the shortage of doctors, the lack of funds etc. But we'll keep you accountable for that.

Ms Martel: I am pleased to make some comments in response to the speeches I heard from both the minister and his parliamentary assistant. Let me respond first to something the minister said, which is, "We have to do this because we were faced with such an enormous debt when we took office," as if the Liberals didn't know about the magnitude of that debt. It's worth reading into the record again comments made by both Gerry Phillips and Monte Kwinter before the election, before the 231 promises, about that very deficit. Here is Monte Kwinter, down in the estimates committee, the estimates for the Ministry of Finance, June 3, 2003, and he's grilling Madam Ecker about the Conservative budget. He says, "I therefore take it that there is a \$5-billion risk in the budget.... So, Minister, I say to you again, I do think your budget is high risk." Well, it certainly was. But Monte Kwinter said this on August 13, 2003, before the election: "Liberal MPP Monte Kwinter (York Centre) accused the government of hiding the fact it has a growing deficit that could reach \$5 billion."

My point is this: The Liberals, before the election, were well aware that we were looking at a \$5-billion deficit, but that didn't stop the Liberals from going out and making 231 promises to buy the election. So I'm a little hard-pressed now to accept the rather lame excuse from the minister that we have to bring in a most regressive health care premium because we didn't know the magnitude of the deficit; not true, not factually correct at all. Let's face it, this bill is all about a very regressive health care tax, a premium that your Premier said he would never bring in and a tax that he said he would never bring in. It is extremely regressive and hits modest- and middle-income families. The point is, you did have other choices, and I'll get to those in my next go-round.

Mr Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): The sparkling light that Ontarians see at the end of their fiscal tunnel is not an onrushing express freight train, as it had been under the former government, but is, rather, bright sunlight as the province of Ontario turns the corner on a dark night of deepening debt. For the first time in more than a decade, Ontarians can see a clear path to a balanced budget. By the time Ontarians pass judgment on our government in 2007, they will see their finances become self-sustaining for the first time in more than a decade and a half.

It is said in hockey that if you can skate well, then everything else is teachable, but if you're a poor skater, then no other skill matters. Similarly, if Ontario can balance its budget, then investing in Ontarians, their education, their health, and their social and economic well-being is not only possible, it is sustainable, year after year.

In Ottawa, the federal government took five long fiscal years to balance its budget after inheriting the Mulroney \$39-billion annual deficit. Now, after paying down tens of billions of dollars in debt, Ottawa can confidently put health care money on the table, knowing that it can maintain that spending year after year.

That's what Ontarians will see in the coming years: a government that will make the tough decisions to get the provincial budget balanced and then start paying down the debt so that money that now goes out in interest payments is available to make Ontario a better place to live and work. Thank you.

Mr Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): It really is interesting to listen to the government talk about the problems with funding health care. We had the Premier stand in front of a television in an ad and look into the camera and say, "I will not raise your taxes." This was when they had their calculation of the cost of all of their promises. I think their cost was something like \$5.5 billion. We find out that when they got into government and asked the finance department, "What are our promises worth?" it came back \$18 billion.

It's pretty hard to feel sorry for these people who, with open eyes, as we heard before, Gerry Phillips and Monte Kwinter, were all estimating that the deficit was going to be \$5 billion. They had open eyes as to what the problem was and they stood in front of the camera and said, "I will not raise your taxes."

We hear that south of the border now too when John Kerry, another liberal, is standing in front of the TV camera and saying, "I will not raise your taxes if you earn under \$200,000." I say a liberal is a liberal is a liberal. All of these people create havoc in our political system. How can we expect people to believe any politician when there are so many misrepresentations during campaigns? This government has nothing to be proud of in terms of their fiscal management.

The Acting Speaker: That concludes our time available for questions and comments. The member for Eglinton-Lawrence has two minutes to reply.

Mr Colle: My friend from Ottawa mentions that he likes George Bush. He also likes George Bush's \$400-billion deficit. He's one of the architects—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: Excuse me, will the member take his seat. The member from Lanark-Carleton?

Mr Sterling: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I didn't mention George Bush in my speech.

The Acting Speaker: Take your seat. I'm sorry. I apologize. The member from Eglinton-Lawrence.

Mr Colle: The member from Lanark-Carleton talks about deficits. There isn't one member over there who admits to this day that there's a \$5.6-billion deficit. The only person I've heard mention it is the newly elected leader who says they were wrong and he agrees with us. I want to see them stand up and say there was a \$5.6-billion deficit. They still, to this day, don't admit it. I dare them to stand up and say that.

And for my NDP friends, do you know what really astonishes me about the NDP? They talk about the fact they knew about all this deficit and the pressures, yet the first bill we put before this House, which would roll back the corporate tax cut for the wealthiest Ontarians for over \$2 billion—guess what they did? They voted against rolling back the corporate tax cut, and the NDP voted

against rolling back private school funding. You tell me how that shakes with their philosophy. They voted for funding private schools, and they voted for a \$2.3-billion tax cut for the wealthiest Ontarians and for corporate Ontario.

Interjections.

Mr Colle: So don't tell us about consistency, my NDP friend. Why did you vote for that corporate tax cut? Why did you vote for private school funding when you knew our private schools didn't need the money? It's our public schools that need the money. Shame on you.

1650

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Jim Flaherty (Whitby-Ajax): It is a privilege—

Interjections.

Mr Flaherty: I'll wait for the member for Eglinton-Lawrence to relax over there. That's all right. He's exercised.

It's a privilege to speak in the House this afternoon on Bill 106, which is actually a finance ministry bill, although one wouldn't know that from some of the speeches we've heard so far this afternoon in this House.

I speak, of course, as the member for Whitby-Ajax. Also, I'm honoured to be the finance critic, having served as Minister of Finance in 2001-02, when, I might add, the budget of the province of Ontario was about \$65 billion. Just three years later, this Liberal government has got the spending moving up pretty close now to \$80 billion—staggering spending increases in a short period of time. I'll have an opportunity to look at some of those spending increases, this spending spree that the Liberal government has gone on since they were elected in October 2003.

The bill itself, Bill 106, has a provision in it that many people in Ontario are now familiar with. This is the provision relating to the health levy, which the Liberals like to call a premium. We know it's not a premium, because when you pay a premium you actually get something in return. You get coverage, for example. When you pay a premium in your auto insurance, you get coverage for liability you might incur operating your motor vehicle or for injuries you might sustain operating that vehicle, under the accident benefits section. When you buy home insurance, you get coverage in case your home suffers miscellaneous types of losses or, of course, fire. You get something for your money.

In this item here, which is a tax, not a premium, one actually gets nothing. In fact, in Ontario, you get less than you had before in health care. Before, you had chiropractic coverage; before, you had optometry coverage; and before, there was quite substantial physiotherapy coverage in the province of Ontario. But now the people of the province have the opportunity to pay more and get less health care services in this province, a remarkable accomplishment by this Liberal government in its first year in office.

The preamble to the bill says, "The Income Tax Act is amended to impose a tax called the Ontario health premium. The new section 2.2 imposes the tax and the

new section 3.1 governs how it is calculated.” That’s the preamble.

You then go to section 2.2 of the bill that we’re debating, and it doesn’t say that every individual shall pay a premium. It says, “Every individual shall pay a tax”—they want to call it the Ontario health premium—“for a taxation year ending after December 31, 2003 if the individual is resident in Ontario,” and then in section 3.1, it talks about how you calculate the tax. Of course, it’s calculated like an income tax. They look at the amount of net income an individual has per year, and then they assess this tax as an income tax on that revenue—the income that the individual has.

So it looks like a tax; it’s called a tax in the bill. In fact, the issue has already come up now with some civil servants, including employees of the government of Canada. There’s a letter from the director general of the finance and human resources directorate in the House of Commons, for example, dated just September 28, 2004, less than a month ago, in which he deals with numerous inquiries received regarding the Ontario health premium introduced in the Ontario budget on May 18, 2004. I’m going to clarify it for the thousands and thousands of people who are in the federal employment. It says, in part, and I’ll just read a little bit of it:

“It appears that many individuals are relating the OHP to the Ontario government’s former Ontario Health Insurance Plan ... thus creating the confusion. The OHP is not a health insurance plan but rather a personal income tax payable on all taxable income. The Ontario government calls it a premium however it is deducted as income tax and reported on employee pay stubs and T4s as income tax. All employees working in the province of Ontario are subject to the OHP tax regardless of the employee’s province of residence because income tax at source is based on the employee’s province of employment,” and so on.

So we have a new tax from this government of Ontario, called a tax in the bill, being interpreted that way in Ottawa and certainly being interpreted that way by people who work in Ontario, who know when they look at their pay slips that this is an income tax deducted at source. The people who get up every morning and go to work in Ontario, 12 month a year, thanks to this Liberal government now get to pay more income tax and receive fewer services in Ontario, which I dare say is not what they bargained for. Not only is it an income tax, it’s a regressive income tax based on income categories.

But is it a health tax? We know it is not a premium, because you don’t get anything for it. But is it a health tax or is it some other kind of tax? I suppose you could say it was a health tax if the people of Ontario were guaranteed that the revenue generated by this new tax would be used for health services. We know already that the answer to that is no. We know that the government of the day has used some of this revenue already, according to their own answers in this place, for water mains, sewers and other things, instead of for health care in Ontario. But they say no. I hear a couple of the members opposite say, “No, it’s not so.”

I’ll look in the bill now, because I’m sure if it’s not so, the Liberal government that drafted this Bill 106 we’re debating would put in the bill that the money raised by this new tax in Ontario must be used for health care. Right? So the Liberal members—a couple are nodding over there. Let’s look in the bill and see if we can find a provision that says the money must be used for health care.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): It’s not in there, Jim.

Mr Flaherty: I tried to find it. I looked through it. I did find a provision—no, there’s nothing that says the revenue raised by this new tax must be used for health care. There is a provision, section 29.1, that says this: “The public accounts for each fiscal year shall include information about the use of the revenue from the Ontario health premium.”

Isn’t that nice? All of us in Ontario who work get to pay this thing called a health tax. It takes money out of our own pockets, up to \$900 off people. They take the money right out of people’s pockets, the people who go to work all across Ontario. They call it a health tax. They tried “health premium”; that doesn’t work. Call it what it is: a health tax. Is it really a health tax? No. The money goes into the general revenue fund, and they can use it for anything. They even put it in the bill they drafted. They say, “We’ll let you know. We’ll report to public accounts.” So a year later, after we all have this money deducted at source from our paycheques, they’ll let us know what they used it for. Who knows what they’re going to use the money for? We know it isn’t a premium; we know it is a tax. We know it’s not necessarily for health. So what should we call it? Why don’t we just call it what it is? It’s a tax. It’s an employment income tax increase in Ontario that the government is putting into the consolidated general revenue fund.

Now that we have that straightened out, let’s see what they are using the money for. In health care, we know they’ve proposed—well, they’ve already done it—fewer services for chiropractors, optometrists and physiotherapists. We know—because the Premier says he’s going to do it—that he’s going to buy back some privately owned clinics in Ontario. Now, here’s a real waste of taxpayers’ money: Here we have an MRI clinic in Ajax, Ontario—I’m proud to represent the riding of Whitby-Ajax—where people can get services, paid for by whom? Paid for by OHIP. Paid for by our publicly funded, publicly administered health care plan. What do the Premier and the Liberal government have against that? They say they’re in favour of that, as a matter of fact. They say they support the principles of the Canada Health Act. Yes, universal; yes, publicly administered by OHIP in Ontario. Why on earth would you want to shut that business down or have it run by civil servants instead of by people employed in the private sector? The people who need the treatments, the people who need diagnostic imaging, including CT scans and MRIs, don’t care, quite frankly, if it’s a civil servant who’s operating the MRI machine or whether it’s someone employed in the private

sector. They care about two things, maybe three: (1) Who pays? Is it covered by OHIP? The answer is yes. (2) Is the person administering the diagnostic test qualified to do so? The answer of course is yes, because the colleges govern and regulate that in Ontario.

1700

They also care about waiting lists, and do the privately operated clinics comply with the Canada Health Act? Yes they do, because the services are paid for by the public purse. They also reduce the waiting times in Ontario and that's what my constituents want. I don't know, Liberal members opposite, whether you hear that in your ridings or whether your ears are open, whether you hear this concern especially about MRIs, diagnostic imaging. Why on earth would you support a government policy that would increase waiting times in Ontario? Why would you vote for a bill that would result in people having to wait longer for important diagnostic imaging when the services provided in the form they're being provided now comply with the Canada Health Act? Surely this can only be some kind of strange ideology by the Liberal Party that says that somehow a service delivered by a public servant is necessarily a higher-quality service than that delivered by someone employed in the private sector. What nonsense. I hope you reflect on that when you think of how revenues are being used under this new tax in Ontario.

Here's another waste of money the Minister of Health talks about. We're going to have a new level of bureaucracy. Here's another great one. Watch where this money goes over the next couple of years in Ontario. We're going to have not just the bureaucracy that we have at Queen's Park—my goodness, we have a huge Ministry of Health, with all kinds of divisions and sections. Not only that, not only the regional health councils that we have, not only the 155 or so public hospitals in Ontario, with boards of governors, trustees, not only the Ontario Medical Association and the physicians and all the colleges that regulate health professionals; we're now going to have regional bureaucracies in Ontario. Here's a new invention by this Liberal government. It will require study, meetings, hiring people, memos between the people who are hired, more meetings to clarify the memos, and e-mail. It will require offices and meeting rooms so they can meet some more and talk to each other and reorganize. They'll probably have to hire some people and then they'll have to lay off some other people who were in the hospitals, probably, because they're fighting with the hospitals now.

And what will we end up with? Will we end up with one more service for a patient in need in Ontario? No, but we'll have more directors, managers and a whole new level of bureaucracy that the Liberal government could be proud of in Ontario. We're going the wrong way, I say to the members opposite. We're going the way of fewer services at greater cost and a more bureaucratic health system in Ontario. Can we trust them to do something about health care in the province?

Can we trust them to manage fiscally in a prudent way? We know that there were lots of promises made in

the election, 231—perhaps more than 231 because they don't think that Lorrie Goldstein got every one of them, although he went through all the documents and so on. They promised, in the fiscal sense, that they would not raise taxes. There are at least four or five good ones here that we can talk about and review after the first year. Number 65: "We will balance the budget"—they didn't do that—"keep taxes down"; they didn't do that; they raised taxes. We will "manage prudently." They didn't do that either. The public debt has gone up in Ontario under this new Liberal government. They also say, in number 69, "We will give you better value for your money, while keeping taxes down." That's wrong too. Taxes went up, they broke their promise, and services in health care went down. Number 70: "We will live by the balanced budget law." I really like that one. All these Liberals opposite—including the Premier, the Minister of Finance and the people who bring us Bill 106, the new tax—are the ones who said, in order to get elected in this province, "We will live by the balanced budget law."

That's the law that says that if you're going to raise taxes, you have to go to the people and get the people's OK to do that. After all, the government doesn't have any money that it hasn't taken from the people who work in Ontario in the first place. But you go to them and say, and it's a fair question, "Do you mind if we raise taxes? We want to use it for a good purpose." The Liberals would probably say, "Health care"; it's not so, of course, but they'd probably say that in order to try to get more money out of people in the province, as they did when they tried to call this a health premium instead of a health tax, and now just a tax. Anyway, they didn't live by the balanced budget law.

Number 71 is good too. It says, "We will make sure the debt goes in one direction only: down." Wrong. Have a look at the estimates for Ontario. Have a look at the spending and the size of the public debt in the province during your first year in office and you'll see it's gone up, my friends. "We will make sure the debt goes in one direction only: down." That's number 71, another broken promise by the Liberal government.

I'm trying to find one they kept here. Number 167: "We will balance the budget." That's a good one. They broke that promise.

Number 170 is not bad. Let's see: "We will make the budget more accountable." I see. We'll see about that.

What else do we have? Number 226: "We will hold the line on taxes." It's a strange way of holding the line on taxes. Tell that to somebody who gets up in the morning and works all winter and looks at their pay stub at the end of their two-week pay period or their one-week pay period and sees that you took more of their money and gave them less in services. Tell them that you kept promise number 226: "We will hold the line on taxes."

You said it again in number 227: "We will not raise the debt." There it is again. You promised it twice and you broke the promise twice in Ontario. There's more here, but I'm sure you know all the promises you made and I know how badly you must feel, having broken them.

I've been expecting the Premier to make an apology. You'd think, if you made all these promises and people relied on them and you got elected in Ontario, that you'd feel bad when you broke them and that you'd want to give a speech somewhere and say, "I'm sorry." And if people weren't satisfied with that, you'd go back to the people and hold an election and say, "I had to do this. I'm sorry I had to not keep my promises to all of you but here's the way it actually is, I think, and therefore will you elect me anyway, knowing that I can't keep my promises?"

There's no sign that he's prepared to do that yet. The Premier promises that there'll be a fixed election date in October 2007, but given his track record of broken promises, I don't think we can rely on that either. So all we can be sure of is that, I guess, because constitutionally there has to be an election within five years or so, he'll be forced then. The Lieutenant Governor will call him into his office and say, "Your time's up. You've got to go face the people in Ontario." It can't be too soon, that's for sure.

The Liberals had some consultations—I love these things; they know more ways to spend money—before the budget and they came back. They paid with your money to do this and produce this piece of paper. It's actually lots of stuff. They went around and talked to people and said that the people came back and told them they wanted a government they could trust, and they wanted some balance. You have to realize, the Liberal government did this just after they were elected, in the first six months or so, and it came back—it says right here in the summary that people expressed "their indignation about breaches of trust by governments." Imagine what they think of this Liberal government now—"breaches of trust by governments"; all those promises broken. What could be a more fundamental breach of trust?

Then the pledge that my colleague from Lanark referred to a few minutes ago in the House, actually signed by the Premier—I was there that morning in the Sheraton Centre in downtown Toronto. The taxpayer federation was there. The Premier-to-be was up there on a stage, proud as punch of himself. He had a big board with a pledge on it, and do you know what? He signed it. He said he would not raise taxes in Ontario, right there in front of all those people and those cameras and everything. Then he goes and talks to the people of Ontario, and they say, "We want to be able to trust our government." Then what does he do? He brings in a budget with the highest single tax increases in the history of the province of Ontario, when the Minister of Finance brought in the budget.

1710

It's shocking, isn't it? It's shocking, it's brazen; it actually mocks the people of Ontario. I had someone say to me in the county of Dufferin over the weekend, one of the few people who actually came up to me and who acknowledged to me—and he whispered it, of course—"I voted for McGuinty." I can understand how embarrassed

he was, given what's happened since then, all these broken promises. I can understand the Toronto Sun rating the Premier's performance as F for failure. There you go. Why? Because the Liberals spent all your taxpayers' money on this study, which said, yes, trust—confidence, en français—trust, have confidence in the word of government. And only one year in, all of those promises—broken. Those were the pre-budget consultations by the government, using taxpayers' money.

Now, this tax that Bill 106 proposes to bring in, as I say, is not a health tax; it's not a premium. If it were, people would be entitled to services for it. You remember back—and there is some confusion on this for people who remember OHIP premiums. You actually got something for them. That got you enrolled in the OHIP plan as an individual. If you paid the family rate, you got enrolled as a family. So there was an entitlement to that when you paid that OHIP premium. This tax that has been imposed doesn't give you that.

So what are we left with in Bill 106? We're left with a pure tax grab based on wages and salary, based on the level of your income that the government could use for any purpose it wants, that the government specifically promised not to do when it was running for public office and for which the Premier signed a pledge.

Interestingly, back in 1989, if you go back and look at when OHIP premiums were abolished, the government of the day was the Liberal government of David Peterson; the Minister of Finance was Robert Nixon. When the last Liberal government of Ontario abolished OHIP premiums—and they were premiums, not a tax—they said that it was an unfair burden on the people of Ontario. They saw the regressive nature of doing it. Here we have a Liberal government 15, 16 years later forgetting the lesson that the last Liberal government in this province understood, and that is the regressive nature of that kind of taxation for health services in Ontario.

Some Liberals—and this is in this study that I referred to a moment ago—say it's OK to increase taxes if it results in more services. As I say, the experience with this new tax in Ontario has been just the opposite. At the same time the tax was introduced, the government reduced health care services in the province, and now has taken an even more drastic step. Now it has said to the public hospitals across the province that they are not going to fund them sufficiently. We know that the hospitals need 4%, 5% or 6%; it depends on which hospital it is in the province. We know that some hospitals have struggled valiantly to balance their budgets over the course of the past few years. In my own riding, Lake-ridge Health has done the right thing, the board has done the right thing, the CEO has done the right thing. They struggled, they had to go through layoffs, they balanced their budget. The reward they get from the Liberal government, the Ministry of Health, is lower funding. So they are faced with the crisis again. You are doing exactly what you shouldn't do. You're saying to hospitals that have made the difficult decisions to become more efficient, "We're going to reduce your funding."

Now Mr Smitherman, the Minister of Health, wants to fight with the volunteer boards of directors, the boards of governors and trustees. He says to them, "Today's your deadline. Today, October 12, you have to bow down to the Liberal government of Ontario and accept the money we're giving you." Or what? He's going to put hospitals in receivership. That's what he threatens to do.

We have a bully as the Minister of Health, bullying volunteer boards of hospitals across the province of Ontario. That's what we see. He says to them, "All right, you don't like October 12. I'll give you a two-week reprieve. I'll give you to October 26." What an attitude to say to the volunteer boards across the province of Ontario, these people who are doing a great job in our communities—we all know them in our communities, volunteering in our local hospitals. Here's the Minister of Health saying to them on behalf of the Premier and the Liberal members opposite, "You will not have enough funding this year. You'll have to reduce your services." There will be layoffs and all the rest. We'll see that as we go forward in the next few months, this confrontational attitude that the Liberal government is taking with our public hospitals and their boards across the province.

At the same time, you increase the burden on the middle class. I represent Whitby-Ajax. A lot of people in my riding make \$50,000, \$60,000, \$70,000 a year. Sometimes often both mother and father, both partners, are working in the household. Maybe they're making \$70,000, \$80,000. Do you know what you've done to them, you Liberals opposite? You now have them working more than half the year for you, for the government. Can you imagine, more than half the year with an income like that, often with a couple of kids—these are folks who have higher insurance rates for their cars—you broke that promise too; I'll get to that; higher natural gas prices; higher electricity prices since you became the government; they've got mortgage payments that are likely to rise as interest rates rise.

Mr Dunlop: Look what they did to gasoline.

Mr Flaherty: Commuter rates. Look at that. Look at the burden they are faced with. They had a Liberal Party that said to them, "We will not raise your taxes," got elected and almost immediately raised their taxes.

It's just another burden that puts the tax rate for hard-working middle-class people in the province of Ontario, who work 12 months of the year, lucky to get two or three weeks off, at around 50%, half their money—not for their families, not for their kids, not for hockey equipment, not for dance lessons, not for ju-jitsu and all those other things that kids do that cost money. Not for that, no; for the government so the government can use it for what? For the consolidated general revenue fund, and it goes down into some big sewer and we don't get any more health services; in fact, we get less.

Congratulations to you in your first year of government for increasing the tax burden on middle-class people in Ontario. They have enough of a burden and you're adding to that burden.

Tax policy: I know some Liberals believe you can increase taxes and it doesn't harm the economy. Have a

look at the work of your own Task Force on Productivity, Competitiveness and Economic Progress in the province of Ontario. Have a look at what our tax burden is in the province. The member for Essex ought to read it. It's fascinating reading about competitiveness and productivity in Ontario. We get some people saying—

Interjection.

Mr Flaherty:—like the member for Essex probably says, "You know, our corporate tax burden is about equal with our major competitive jurisdictions in the United States." It's wrong. That's wrong.

Interjection.

Mr Flaherty: No, actually read it. The minister of infrastructure hasn't read this. Can you imagine? The minister for infrastructure of the province of Ontario is unfamiliar with the work of the Task Force on Competitiveness, Productivity and Economic Progress appointed by the government of Ontario? He ought to read it. The disadvantage to our corporations, small and large—and you know, most of them are small businesses: 9%, and worse now because your tax increase has come along since.

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): Mississippi.

Mr Flaherty: No, not Mississippi. Boston is not in Mississippi. Atlanta is not in Mississippi. Philadelphia is not in Mississippi. I'm going to have to now buy a map for the minister of infrastructure because he's unfamiliar with the geography of the United States. He thinks Boston is in Mississippi. He thinks Philadelphia is in Alabama. We've got a minister over there who's in trouble. He's in charge of building infrastructure. Oh, my goodness. We're in worse trouble than we thought. I knew we were in trouble with tax increases. Now we're in big trouble. Who knows where he'll build buildings? He might think Thunder Bay is in Arkansas or somewhere. He might think that. We'll have to get him out, travelling around a bit. You've got to get out more. You've got to travel around a bit more. You've got to move around more.

1720

There are two problems here. One is the increase in taxes—corporate taxes, personal taxes, small business taxes—in Ontario. The other is the fiscal mismanagement in the first year: going on a spending spree of more than \$4 billion; government expenses just taking off like wildfire. It is quite a spending spree in Ontario.

If you are a small business person in Ontario, or someone outside of Ontario thinking of investing in Ontario, one of the first things that you look at is tax policy. In fact, the task force on competitiveness and others have said that the largest determining factor in terms of investment and reinvestment in Ontario is tax policy. Naturally it is. The owner of a small business wants to see what he or she is going to get out of it after they pay all their taxes—less than 50% in the province of Ontario. They're going to want to see whether there is a capital tax. We still have one in Ontario; one of the few jurisdictions that does. That means you pay a tax whether you have a profit or not.

Interjection.

Mr Flaherty: I started that? No, it's not there. The minister of infrastructure really has got to do some—maybe the member for Thunder Bay will help him. They're working on the geography now, about Thunder Bay. Come back; I'll help you with the tax thing in a minute. You keep working on that geography. He's from Toronto, so it may take some time. His mother can't help him because she's going to be busy making \$70,000 a year for the Liberal government.

Interjection.

Mr Flaherty: No, that's only for six months; I'm sorry—\$140,000 annualized. Thank you for correcting me on that.

There's the uncertainty that goes with higher taxes, and these are serious matters for investors in Ontario. I remember visiting an auto parts plant in the county of Simcoe not long ago, a business owned by a couple of entrepreneurs. They're opening another plant. They talked to me about, "Where will our next plant be? Will it be in Michigan"—closer to their major purchasers—"or will it be in Ontario?" One of the fundamental factors is tax policy.

Similarly, in the region of Peel in the past six months: in the plastics business, two plants there, planning to open other plants. The entrepreneur has a couple of plants also in the United States, has to make that decision about, "Where should my next plant be? Should it be in Chicago or should it be in the region of Peel?"

Mr Levac: No.

Mr Flaherty: The member opposite from Peterborough says no, and I agree with him. We want that business here. But you don't get the business here by upping taxes all the time. You may not realize this, but when you increase taxes, you discourage people, I say to the member from Peterborough. You want people to work hard, you want people to reinvest in their businesses, you want them to hire more people in Ontario. You don't do that by increasing the tax burden on entrepreneurs and on the middle class in Ontario, and you don't do it by avoiding some of the fundamental issues that we have.

Interjections.

Mr Flaherty: The Speaker is flexing his Speaker's robes.

There is so much more to cover. There's a whole year of Liberal government. Look at the issues the Liberal government hasn't dealt with that really matter to business.

I was in Haldimand-Norfolk recently, talking to a businessman down there—successful and employs a lot of people in Haldimand-Norfolk. Most of his product is exported to the United States. There are incredible insurance problems for businesses—small businesses, medium-sized businesses—who export to the United States. The insurance coverage costs have skyrocketed for these folks. This has to do, of course, to a significant extent, with border issues. You look at this morning's paper, talking about border issues, and it's a tragedy, the

fact that the Liberal government of Ontario has done nothing to help alleviate the border issues in Fort Erie, Niagara, Windsor, and in Sarnia, the Bluewater Bridge. These are fundamental issues to the strength and the vitality of the Ontario economy. Don't raise taxes. Help Ontario businesses export more efficiently and less expensively. That's what you can do if you actually want to create jobs in the province.

The job news isn't good. I don't know if you looked at the job figures. They were released the other day showing the increase in jobs across Ontario as less than 1% this year. It's bad. Jobs are down in manufacturing and light industry. Jobs are up in the last month in education. The employment numbers are bad. They're flat. When we were the government, in the days when we were reducing taxes in Ontario and people were investing and growing their businesses, particularly small business in Ontario, it resulted in the creation of more than a million new jobs. Look at the numbers now.

In September, employment in Ontario was little changed, leaving gains so far this year at only 0.9% in the province. Employment rose in September in educational services, mostly at the primary and secondary level, offsetting a loss the month before. Employment also increased in public administration, mainly at the provincial level. There you were hiring more people to work for the government in Ontario. There were losses in manufacturing, with the largest decline in food, beverage and tobacco products. Employment also declined in transportation and warehousing. Those are the facts in Ontario with your Liberal Party forming a government in this province.

You have to manage better fiscally. You have to control spending in the province. You have to stop increasing taxes. The burden on entrepreneurs is excessive in the province, and it's not competitive. You also have to do something about the border crossings. We were well on the way that way. I was the Minister of Enterprise. I don't mind saying that I worked closely with a Liberal, Allan Rock. I did. He had the right idea about what needed to be done. I ask you to follow through on the good work that we did and get that done, because it's absolutely imperative.

The member for Essex is shaking his head. He should know better than anybody what needs to be done in Essex if you want to preserve jobs in Essex, if you want to grow the industry in Essex. You'd think you'd recognize that. It's vitally important for our business. That business, US-Canada trade, is \$1 billion per day; 60% of it comes from the province of Ontario. We're all familiar, I hope, with the fact that more and more of the goods are transported these days by road. So it's vitally important in terms of just-in-time delivery in the auto sector and in the agricultural sector that we ensure there is efficient crossing of our borders.

Auto insurance, of course, is a mess generally, thanks to the breaching of the two promises. The first promise by the Liberals was to immediately reduce premiums by 10%. They've broken that promise. And there was a

second promise to make sure that in the next year, the premiums would be reduced by 10% as well. We're into the second year now and we can fully anticipate that that promise will be broken. In fact, last week at estimates, the Minister of Finance virtually admitted that it is unlikely he will accomplish that goal. So we'll have the two broken promises on automobile insurance.

On the spending side—more than \$4 billion in new spending. This is the list, the lovely list of \$4 billion in new spending by the Liberal government, resulting in a substantial deficit and increase in the public debt. It's fundamental that there be control over spending. I started off by saying that if you look at the budget now, spending is now approaching \$80 billion in Ontario, compared to \$65 billion just three years ago. It tells you a great deal about the consequences of runaway spending in the province.

When you look at the nature of the spending—the Minister of Finance gave a speech to the economic club, a week ago Friday I believe it was, in which he said he was going to do a line-by-line analysis of the spending of each ministry. Well, he can do it if he wants to—it has been done before—but relatively speaking, it's a waste of time, because there are three ministries, as you know, where most of the money gets spent: health, education and social services.

1730

The Liberals have already devastated the Ministry of Agriculture and reduced the spending—and there wasn't much money there—dramatically by \$65 million, at the same time going on a \$4-billion spending spree in Ontario. If you look at health care spending in particular, health care spending now is at about 46% to 48% of the operating budget of the government, depending on the final figures for the year.

If you look at the government's own economic data in the 2003 Ontario Economic Outlook and Fiscal Review, some of the numbers are very informative. Eighty per cent of the operating spending of the provincial government is transferred to hospitals, school boards and other public sector partners of government. In turn, more than 70% of that is paid out in salaries, wages and benefits. That's in health, education and social services primarily.

If there is going to be a serious effort by the Liberal government to balance the budget in Ontario, then the Liberal government is going to have to address the issues that arise out of that. And I tell you: So far, you're on the wrong track. The spending increases with respect to salaries for community college professors and teachers was relatively high, as you know. I know the Minister of Finance doesn't want to talk about it, but we know that the increase proposed for the physicians in Ontario will average 6% per year over four years. We know that negotiations are ongoing with the school boards. We know the teachers' unions are negotiating with the school boards. Other public sector unions are negotiating. If you're going to control spending in the province of Ontario, you have to address the issue and address it in a consistent manner in order to avoid labour strife in the

province. So I challenge those opposite to address that issue if you're going to control spending as we go forward.

In health, we know that spending overall, according to the government's own figures in the economic outlook, has averaged an increase of 8% per year over the course of the last four years. Now you're saying to hospitals, "4.3%," or whatever it is, and you're saying in effect to the hospitals, "Cut your services to people despite the fact that we've imposed a new tax." Drug expenses, as you know, have been averaging increases of 15% to 20% per year.

The federal money negotiated—and the Liberals seem very proud of this federal money—is about two weeks' worth of health care in the province, and it's flatlined, as I understand it, as we go forward. So that's going to be of very minimal help to the people of Ontario in terms of additional services for health care.

More and more is being spent, and you see it in the outlook. On page 36 of the economic outlook, you see the fact that there are quite substantial revenues in the province, revenues anticipated to go in this fiscal year from \$68.5 billion to \$75 billion, and even more in the following fiscal. In fact, it's anticipated that the increases will be \$4.1 billion per year going forward on average. It's at page 6: "On the basis of private-sector consensus economic projections, Ontario can anticipate average revenue growth of about \$4.1 billion annually."

Surely with prudent fiscal management in Ontario, a competent government could manage to balance a budget year after year with increases in revenues of \$4.1 billion annually. But you can't do it when you increase spending by 10% from 2002-03 to 2003-04, which you've done. You can't do it unless you take some progressive steps with respect to true reform of health care in Ontario. And by that I don't mean the government buying private clinics; what I do mean is complying with the provisions of the Canada Health Act, a publicly funded health care system, but privately delivered services. Nowhere in the Canada Health Act will you find a prohibition to that. In fact, you see it being done in Quebec, you see it being done in Alberta, but for some reason this Liberal government, ideologically driven in some way, seems to think it is somehow a defect to have someone in the private sector delivering health care services, even if they do so at less expense, more efficiently and reducing waiting lists. That's an issue that has to be addressed by this Liberal government, I tell you, if you ever want to get re-elected in Ontario, because you can't take more money from people, say it's for health care and then see the quality and quantity of the services diminishing in the province.

Now we see the costing of promises. As I raised with the Premier in question period today, we had this really rather unpleasant incident in the government in the last year, where we see a party running for power, costing its promises, making 231 promises or more, and saying, "Those promises have been fully costed"—those were the words of the now-Premier of Ontario—"at \$5.9 bil-

lion." That's what was said. Then, shortly after the election last October, it was learned, and not surprisingly, that the provincial government public service and the Ministry of Finance had costed the promises made by the Liberal Party when they were seeking office. This is prudent. This is the kind of thing the superb people in the Ministry of Finance do when they see that a new government might be elected, or the changing economic circumstances. They look at what's being promised and they say, "This is what it will cost"—their best estimates of what it will cost, of course.

If it were close, I wouldn't quibble about it, and I'm sure that we in opposition wouldn't quibble about it, because we want to be constructive. We want to be helpful, because goodness knows, these Liberals need a lot of help, especially about fiscal management. We warm to you. We want to help you manage fiscally in Ontario. As someone in Ontario who has actually balanced a budget, I'm willing to help you do it. All right? You too can reach that plateau. You can climb that mountain. You can do it. But you can't do it with extravagant promises.

The costing of the promises—this was produced by the Ministry of Finance.

Hon David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): Mr Speaker, on a point of order: It's untrue that the member opposite does not have a sense of humour.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you for your contribution. I would return to the member for Whitby-Ajax.

Interjection.

Mr Flaherty: My mother is retired, but if you could find a spot for her over there—I mean, \$70,000 for six months is not bad. And the estimated cost did not include that appointment, by the way. I looked for it in here, but it's not there.

In a serious way—and I say to all members, this is serious business—the costing of the promises that was done a year ago exceeds \$18 billion. That's more than three times the amount Mr McGuinty told the people of Ontario his fully costed promises would cost.

They have known about this report opposite for a year. We applied for the report under the information and privacy legislation in Ontario. The Liberal government fought us time after time. They took every procedural step to try to make sure that this document never came to light. Now we know why, of course. It's embarrassing. It's horribly embarrassing to the government of the day to say, "Our promises, ladies and gentlemen of Ontario, voters of Ontario, are \$5.9 billion," and have the professionals in the Ministry of Finance, who know the programs in the various ministries in Ontario, say, "Actually, no, \$18 billion." It's more than \$18 billion, because some are to be determined. So it's actually more than that.

It goes to trustworthiness, doesn't it? It goes to whether one can have any faith at all in the word of this government, particularly in fiscal matters. And that's so important for our economic growth, for our quality of life

and for our standard of living in Ontario. It also shows, even with the small number of promises that have been kept, that the cost of them is more than \$4 billion so far.

1740

I say to the members opposite and the Liberal government, you promised to manage prudently. Have a look at this list. I'm sure you have previously. Have a look at the costs of these promises and start to control spending; to use the Minister of Finance's phrase, "cost containment." That means difficult decisions. I know; I was there. It means that people will be unhappy with some of those decisions in some sectors but it's something you have to do. That's the responsibility of government. You have to make choices about spending. You cannot fund all things for all people. You have proven that you can promise all things to all people. You did that. But now, of course, you're learning you can't deliver.

I encourage you to manage prudently in the province. It's vitally important for the next generation, certainly. It's a very competitive world. Don't increase taxes like you do in Bill 106. Cut spending instead, or at least control the rate of growth of spending as we go forward. You can't have spending increasing at 4%, 5% and 6% per annum with an economy growing at 3% per annum unless you want government to take up more and more of the GDP, unless you want to encourage people who are entrepreneurial in this country to cash out. We don't want them to cash out. We want them to invest and reinvest and create more and more jobs. We don't want to discourage entrepreneurs. We don't want to discourage people from investing in Ontario who live abroad and are looking for opportunities to grow their businesses elsewhere.

We have some promises that have been broken. We also have some opportunities now. There is an opportunity for this government to manage prudently. There's an opportunity to look seriously at spending, and I don't mean what the Minister of Finance has referred to by his line-to-line review. I mean looking at health care spending, looking at health care reform, looking at efficiencies, as the government of Tony Blair has done, in health care, looking at opportunities for more private delivery of health care, which will actually drive down waiting times in the province of Ontario.

There are some very good examples, some simple examples—I urge you to look at them—as in Alberta, as in the opportunities here for cataract surgery. The surgeons, the ophthalmologists who do that surgery—which many of us will undergo if we live long enough because, as you know, it's something that happens as you get older—can do it at 75% of the current costs. They can get rid of the waiting lists in the province without any investment by the government of Ontario in capital. They'll do it themselves. That's the kind of service increase that people in Ontario, particularly in the aging population, want to see happen.

I've spoken already about diagnostic imaging and the importance of that. How can you legitimately say to someone in the province who is disabled and not working

because of a back problem they have to wait months and months for an MRI so they could even discover, and the radiologist and the orthopaedic surgeon give them advice about, the nature of the problem and how it can be remedied so that they can get back to work and be rehabilitated in Ontario? That hurts the economy in the province as well as hurting the individual and his or her family.

I encourage you to get more for the money that is being spent on the health care side so that services will actually improve.

In education, I hope you will reconsider a hard cap of 20 students per class. Talk to the school principals who are experienced across Ontario about that. Talk to the member from Sudbury, who I know was a school principal at one time, about the foolishness of, "What do you do with the 21st student and the 22nd student?" about having to have more portables, about having to hire an extra teacher, about the inefficiencies of that. I know there's concern with literacy. We need numeracy and literacy. We need computer skills for our young people. Whether they're in a class of 19, 23 or 21 isn't the issue. The issue is the quality of the training, the opportunities for teachers to learn, the opportunity for many teachers who don't know how to teach phonics today to learn to teach phonics, because some children need to learn to read phonetically rather than in other ways.

So I encourage you in the education sphere, which, as you know, is a huge spender in government, to use those resources more efficiently so that we get to that goal of increased numeracy, literacy and computer skills which will help our young people be ready for the challenges they face in a competitive world, and not set artificial goals that will benefit very few in the province.

There has been a fundamental breach of trust by the Liberal government with the people of Ontario in one year. There were numerous promises made. Many of them, of course, have been broken. This breeds a certain cynicism among voters in the province and, regretfully, they won't be able to exercise their opportunity to take a more positive view and make a more positive choice in Ontario for a few years yet.

They see that taxes are up and that spending is up and that the debt is up. It's been a while in Ontario since we've had a Liberal government, but if you go back and look at the last one, from 1985 to 1990, you'll see that same pattern in a time of economic growth, where even with the increase in revenues—and we've already noted that the increases in revenues now are more than \$4 billion per year—even then, the demand for spending by the Liberal government, in that case the David Peterson government, was insatiable. Every year, more spending. Every year, higher tax revenues and, unbelievably, more and more debt accrued. And that was during the good times.

We need to be prudent. I encourage the Liberal government to be prudent, to look a little ahead. Sir John A. Macdonald was fond of saying, "Look a little ahead, my friends," and I encourage you to look a little ahead.

Economic growth may not be 3% or 4% several years out. We have oil prices going up. We have the Canadian dollar going up. We have other variables. We have intense competition around the world. Look a little ahead. Be prudent in your economic management. Control spending increases in Ontario. Make sure that you concentrate on the fundamental services of health care, services for vulnerable people and education as we go forward, and not embark on \$4-billion-plus spending sprees as you did in your first year in office.

Have a look at the costs that you're incurring in collective bargaining. It's vitally important that there be cost containment in that area. As you know, if there isn't, you'll be facing the kind of situation that the government that followed the last Liberal government faced—that is, the NDP government of Bob Rae—and a social contract situation which was unpleasant for all concerned, I guess it's fair to say, when that happened back in the early 1990s. So reflect on what it takes to manage prudently. You can't do the steps that you need to take in one fell swoop, but you can start now.

Last year, the Minister of Finance and the Premier said there was a four-year plan. In his speech to the Economic Club of Toronto a couple of weeks ago, the Minister of Finance said there's a three-year plan. Many people are wondering if there's a plan at all to manage the finances of the province of Ontario prudently, and I urge you to have a look at what needs to be done. Encourage economic growth in the province of Ontario because, without economic growth, there will not be sufficient funds for the increase in spending in health care, education, and services for vulnerable people.

So it's vital that we have that economic growth, and if we're going to have that economic growth, you need to reduce taxes, encourage entrepreneurs, and encourage people in the province of Ontario to work by letting them keep more of their own money. If do you that, then we can look forward to increased prosperity in Ontario. We can look forward to what has always been viewed, I think, as the Canadian dream, and that is that each generation has a higher quality of life and a higher standard of living than the generation before. You don't do that by increasing the burden on the backs of middle-class people and entrepreneurs in Ontario.

1750

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Ms Martel: I want to follow up on something the member from Whitby-Ajax said, which is that the Liberals need to be reminded that not all of the new health care tax is actually going into health care services. He talked about sewer pipes and ads. When he did that, some of the Liberal backbenchers shook their heads as if that wasn't true.

So, let's go first to the government's own budget, on page 44—and I would encourage Mr Caplan to read it. Page 44 of the Liberal government's budget lists almost \$200 million in so-called, alleged health care spending which is outside the Ministry of Health line. It includes \$113 million for watershed and waste water projects

under the Ministry of Municipal Affairs, the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Natural Resources. It also includes \$3 million to promote exercise under the Ministry of Tourism and Recreation.

This is \$200 million that, I remind you, was supposed to go directly into health care services—and it isn't. It's going into hard services, services that most people out there would never conceive to be defined as health care services.

Secondly, if you go to page 70 of the budget, you see why the Liberals had to do that; that is, divert some of the premium money, the health care tax money, to things outside of health care. On page 70 of the budget it clearly shows the revenue that the Liberal government is getting this year.

They are getting \$726 million in health transfers from the federal Liberal government. They are getting another \$1.635 billion from the new health tax. That takes them up to \$2.361 billion. That's not the same amount of money that appears on the line under the Ministry of Health. In fact, the Ministry of Health spending for this year is about \$200 million less than that amount of revenue. So it's very clear that this money is being spent on other than health care services.

Mrs Carol Mitchell (Huron-Bruce): I would just like to follow through on some of the comments that were made by the member for Whitby-Ajax: "Follow through on the good work that we did. Let's talk about all the good work that we did, the fiscal responsibility, how our business community was supported."

As many of you know, I come from a small business background. So, I want to talk from very personal experiences that I saw first-hand throughout the riding of Huron-Bruce.

What they did was to give us blackouts, which hurt our industrial business and our—

Interjection.

Mrs Mitchell: These are some of the things that happened. Why did it happen? That's what you ask yourself.

The member over here wants to know, "Well, how did that happen?" That happened because we didn't keep our infrastructure the way it was needed. We went forward into a deregulated market without getting all of the policies in place. And I'm glad that we have the opportunity to debate.

What else did they give us? Poor roads. One of the things that I also heard was "moving our merchandise down the roads." Let's talk about the roads in our rural communities. I can tell you that if you're driving a truck in our rural communities, you can put it through all the gears in one shot just going from A to B. That's what your government gave us in our rural communities.

Let's talk about some of the other things that were given to us: the infrastructure, the cost of the sewage, the water and all of these systems in rural communities—bringing them up to standard.

When the government withdrew its support, the business community then had to come to the table and

put in an appropriate amount to move their businesses forward.

So when we talk about government and, "Follow through on the good work," I'm pleased to be part of a government that will support our business community and move this province forward in a strong economic state.

Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): I just want to compliment my colleague from Whitby-Ajax for an excellent dissertation this afternoon. He was the finance minister, and the last finance minister in the province of Ontario to fully balance the books. He did that with credibility—truly balanced books.

You guys could have balanced the books, as the honourable member pointed out in his remarks. You've been on a \$4-billion spending spree, and you've been trying to blame it all on the previous government. Shame on you is all I can say.

The honourable member next to me here just spoke about rural Ontario. Rural Ontario is being left out of your government. I think only three of your cabinet ministers come from non-major urban centres. There is no representation from rural Ontario.

A funny thing happened when honourable members from all sides of the House were at the International Plowing Match and Rural Expo in Meaford just outside of my riding some three weeks ago. The Liberal wagon was ahead of us in the parade. As we went through the parade, they would get boos. They got booed when they were on stage and Premier McGuinty said he had no more money for farmers, who are having the toughest time—the greatest crisis, certainly the beef industry and the livestock industry, in the history of Ontario—and he had no more money that day for farmers in the BSE crisis. But because he got booed, sure enough, four or five days later, he suddenly found \$35 million more for BSE. I congratulated—

Mr Lou Rinaldi (Northumberland): Thirty.

Mr Wilson: It was \$30 million more; I'm corrected by my honourable colleague.

The fact of the matter is, he says he has no money for anything, and then all of a sudden he has money. So I don't think you guys are being completely forthright about the books at this time. I don't think you're managing with competence or honesty.

I also want to talk about the fact that my colleague mentioned competitiveness and the need to remain competitive. We've had a real blow since you guys came to office. In the last little while, Nacan starch products, Backyard Products, Keller Electric and Blue Mountain Pottery—500 jobs lost in the last few weeks in Collingwood as a result of you not keeping this province competitive.

Ms Churley: I'm very pleased to have a couple of minutes to respond to the speech made by the member for Whitby-Ajax. Of course, I listened carefully to it and all of the comments after that, and I must say, it gives me an opportunity to remind people once again what the Liberals said before the election, before they went out

and made over 200 promises that they knew they couldn't keep. I'm going to read it into the record again because every time I hear Liberals get up and justify their broken promises on the basis of, "Oh, we didn't know there was going to be such a big deficit"—they did know.

I'm going to quote again: "I therefore take it that there is a \$5-billion risk in the budget.... So, Minister, I say to you again, I do think your budget is high risk"—Gerry Phillips, estimates committee, June 3, 2003.

"Liberal MPP Monte Kwinter ... accused the government of hiding the fact it has a growing deficit that could reach \$5 billion"—Canadian Press.

Interjections.

Ms Churley: Yes, we know what your answer is. It's the Pinocchio answer. In fact, I just held a party to mark the first anniversary of this Liberal government with a big Pinocchio nose on it, for good reason.

Not only that, this is what was said by Gerry Phillips in 2002: "Billions of dollars of off-book debt are piling up on school boards, hospitals, universities, college and nursing home owners. The province guaranteed to pay the principal and interest, but there is at least \$5 billion of fairly new debt that does not show up on the province's books."

I have even more quotes. The Liberals knew there was a huge deficit. Now they're out there apologizing to the people of Ontario for breaking promises and trying to blame it on a deficit they didn't know about. They knew about the deficit and fooled the people of Ontario into electing them on false promises.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Whitby-Ajax has two minutes to reply.

Mr Flaherty: I thank the member for Toronto-Danforth twice for her comments, particularly the comments about the foreknowledge that the Liberal

government had before it was elected with respect to the challenges that would be faced by government. This challenge, by the way, of controlling spending is a challenge that any government would face. We faced it for eight years in government and tried to control spending and had some success, but not enough, quite frankly. It is a major challenge to control spending in Ontario and not let it spiral away from you. In fact, that's in the document that was produced by Mr Sorbara, the Minister of Finance, the economic outlook for 2003, where he said, "The only sustainable approach in the long run, both for households and for governments, is to keep spending in line with income."

"While governments and households are dissimilar in many ways, both must live within their means."

So we have to live within our means as government.

We, as opposition, intend to try to keep you to account in this way, as we have tried today in debate. We will watch the spending. We will encourage you not to increase taxes and, in fact, to reduce taxes and encourage investment. A very important concern is this, and that is that investment decisions are made today for two and three and four and five years hence. When investors who are in business in Ontario today, or abroad looking at Ontario as a place to start a business, invest or grow an existing business, to add plant or new equipment—we want them to be encouraged to invest in the province of Ontario and not discouraged by poor fiscal management, uncertainty and high taxes.

The Acting Speaker: That concludes this round of debate on Bill 106.

It being 6 o'clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 pm.

The House adjourned at 1801.



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Pupatello, Hon / L'hon Sandra (L)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
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Rinaldi, Lou (L)	Northumberland	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Renouvellement de l'infrastructure publique
Runciman, Robert W. (PC)	Leeds-Grenville	Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition
Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Davenport	
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TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Mardi 12 octobre 2004

SANCTION ROYALE

Le lieutenant-gouverneur 3290

PREMIÈRE LECTURE

**Loi de 2004 sur l'accessibilité
pour les personnes handicapées
de l'Ontario, projet de loi 118,
*M^{me} Bountrogianni***
Adoptée 3292

**Loi de 2004 sur la Semaine
de sensibilisation aux archives,
projet de loi 119, *M. O'Toole***
Adoptée 3292

**Loi de 2004 modifiant la Loi
sur la cité de Toronto,
projet de loi 120, *M^{me} Wynne***
Adoptée 3292

DÉCLARATIONS MINISTÉRIELLES ET RÉPONSES

**Loi sur les personnes handicapées
de l'Ontario**
M. McGuinty 3293
M^{me} Bountrogianni 3293
M. Jackson 3295
M. Prue 3296

QUESTIONS ORALES

**Restructuration du secteur
de l'électricité**
M. Lalonde 3302
M. Duncan 3302

DEUXIÈME LECTURE

**Loi de 2004 sur les mesures
budgétaires (n° 2),
projet de loi 106, *M. Sorbara***
Débat présumé ajourné 3326

CONTENTS

Tuesday 12 October 2004

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Unemployment	
Mr Wilson.....	3287
Liberal campaign promises	
Ms Churley.....	3287
Mrs Witmer.....	3288
OPP awards	
Mr Brownell.....	3287
Leslie M. Frost Centre	
Ms Scott.....	3288
Agriculture 101	
Mr Wilkinson.....	3288
Oktoberfest	
Mr Milloy.....	3289
Ontario economy	
Mr Delaney.....	3289
Government's record	
Ms Smith.....	3289

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

Standing committee on public accounts	
Mr Sterling.....	3290, 3291
Debates adjourned.....	3290, 3291
Standing committee on general government	
Mr Lalonde.....	3291
Report adopted.....	3291
Standing committee on social policy	
Mr Leal.....	3291
Report adopted.....	3291
Standing committee on government agencies	
Reports deemed adopted.....	3292

FIRST READINGS

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2004, Bill 118, Mrs Bountrogianni	
Agreed to.....	3292
Archives Awareness Week Act, 2004, Bill 119, Mr O'Toole	
Agreed to.....	3292
Mr O'Toole.....	3292
City of Toronto Amendment Act, 2004, Bill 120, Ms Wynne	
Agreed to.....	3292
Ms Wynne.....	3292

MOTIONS

Private members' public business	
Mr Duncan.....	3292
Agreed to.....	3293

Committee membership

Mr Duncan.....	3293
Agreed to.....	3293

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

Ontarians with disabilities

legislation	
Mr McGuinty.....	3293
Mrs Bountrogianni.....	3293
Mr Jackson.....	3295
Mr Prue.....	3296

ORAL QUESTIONS

Ministers' integrity

Mr Runciman.....	3296
Mr McGuinty.....	3297, 3305
Mr Baird.....	3305

Government appointments

Mr Runciman.....	3297
Mr McGuinty.....	3298
Mr Klees.....	3303
Mr Smitherman.....	3303

Hepatitis C

Mr Hampton.....	3298, 3300
Mr McGuinty.....	3299
Mr Smitherman.....	3299, 3300

Liberal campaign promises

Mr Flaherty.....	3301
Mr McGuinty.....	3301

OMA agreement

Mr Hampton.....	3302
Mr McGuinty.....	3302

Electricity restructuring

Mr Lalonde.....	3302
Mr Duncan.....	3302

Long-term care

Ms Martel.....	3303
Mr Smitherman.....	3304

Ontarians with disabilities

legislation	
Mr Wong.....	3304
Mrs Bountrogianni.....	3304

Home care

Mr Prue.....	3305
Mr Smitherman.....	3305, 3306
Ms Churley.....	3306

PETITIONS

Waterloo-Wellington transportation action plan	
Mr Arnott.....	3306

Optometrists

Mr Kormos.....	3306
Ms Martel.....	3308

Eye examinations

Mr Craiton.....	3307
-----------------	------

Kingston Stockyards

Mr Hardeman.....	3307
------------------	------

Health care services

Ms Martel.....	3307, 3309
----------------	------------

GO Transit service

Mr Delaney.....	3308
-----------------	------

Chiropractic services

Mrs Witmer.....	3308
-----------------	------

Landfill

Mr Dunlop.....	3308
----------------	------

Government deficits

Mr Berardinetti.....	3309
----------------------	------

Leslie M. Frost Centre

Mr Miller.....	3309
----------------	------

Immigrants' skills

Mr Flynn.....	3309
---------------	------

SECOND READINGS

Budget Measures Act, 2004 (No. 2),

Bill 106, Mr Sorbara	
Mr Sorbara.....	3310
Mr Colle.....	3312, 3316
Mr Dunlop.....	3315
Ms Martel.....	3315, 3324
Mr Delaney.....	3315
Mr Sterling.....	3316
Mr Flaherty.....	3316, 3326
Mrs Mitchell.....	3325
Mr Wilson.....	3325
Ms Churley.....	3326
Debate deemed adjourned.....	3326

ROYAL ASSENT

The Lieutenant Governor.....	3290
------------------------------	------

OTHER BUSINESS

Leader of the Opposition

The Speaker.....	3289
------------------	------

Reports, Integrity Commissioner

The Speaker.....	3289, 3290
------------------	------------

Report of Chief Election Officer

The Speaker.....	3290
------------------	------

Visitors

The Speaker.....	3292
------------------	------

Continued overleaf



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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

First Session, 38th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 38^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 13 October 2004

Mercredi 13 octobre 2004



Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 13 October 2004

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 13 octobre 2004

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

GASOLINE TAX

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): As of this month, the provincial government is committed to turning over a portion of the provincial gas tax to cities to finance their transit systems. Regrettably, this policy discriminates against people who live and work in rural Ontario.

We who live in rural and small-town Ontario pay the full 14.7 cents per litre of gas tax to the province, just like Ontario's urban residents do. How, then, can the government possibly justify a tax rebate that benefits only people who live in the city? Most municipalities would not oppose using a portion of the gasoline tax to rebuild aging infrastructure in their communities. But our rural residents know that any way you look at it, this policy is a special, exclusive deal for Ontario's cities.

Even the federal Liberal government, in promising to share a portion of the federal gas tax with municipalities, has said the money must be available to municipalities large and small. This commitment was made by the Honourable John Godfrey in a speech to the Toronto Board of Trade on October 1. In light of the federal commitment, how is it that the provincial Liberals can be so fixated on our cities, to the complete exclusion of rural Ontario?

In Waterloo-Wellington we have an answer: The town of Minto and the township of Wellesley have both passed resolutions on the sharing of the gas tax and they are insisting on fair distribution based on a formula that would ensure that they receive equal treatment from this government. The municipalities in Waterloo-Wellington have outlined their transportation priorities through their support of the Waterloo-Wellington transportation action plan. There are over 40 projects in the plan, and transit is among them, but the majority of them demonstrate the need to include rural Ontario—its roads and bridges—in any dedicated distribution of gas tax revenue.

Rural Ontario needs to speak up forcefully on this issue and the government needs to listen.

STEEL INDUSTRY

Ms Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): I rise today to call attention to a very important issue for my riding of

Hamilton East and for the entire province. It is the vital role of steelworkers and the steel industry in Ontario, past, present and future.

Last session, and especially during the by-election in Hamilton East, Premier McGuinty promised repeatedly that he would be there for Hamilton steelworkers, but since then his Liberal government has done nothing to help them. There's no plan, there's no long-term strategy and no help for steelworker families and pensioners. Meanwhile, Stelco has just barely avoided bankruptcy and its workers are facing uncertain futures: Will they have jobs? Will they have pensions? Will they have health benefit plans into their retirement years?

Today we find out that Stelco's bondholders, major global players like Deutsche Bank, want to buy up assets for less than they're worth. They're meeting behind closed doors even though Stelco is a publicly traded company.

The government needs to take a serious look at where steel is going. The Premier, along with the Minister of Economic Development and Trade, needs to work in partnership with the federal government to develop a new, comprehensive strategy for steel. We need a long-term strategy, but we also need immediate assistance and immediate government involvement.

I call on the government today to act by immediately increasing the monthly amount guaranteed by the pension benefit guarantee fund from \$1,000 to \$2,500, and to get actively involved in Stelco's current crisis. Stop hiding, stop dragging your heels, and come to the table now to save Stelco.

PAT FORTUNE

Mrs Liz Sandals (Guelph-Wellington): As the MPP for Guelph-Wellington, I rise in the House today to pay tribute to an outstanding Guelph-Wellington constituent who passed away last Monday. Pat Fortune was 71 years of age and just two days away from celebrating her 50th wedding anniversary when she lost her battle with cancer.

Pat represents one of those constituents who gave you her best advice every time you met her, whether you really wanted to hear it or not. She was outspoken at times, but always a defender of the less-advantaged in my riding. I am confident every Guelph-Wellington MPP and every MP over the course of many years knew her well, because she didn't back down if she felt something just had to be changed.

Pat was a lifetime volunteer. For 25 years she volunteered at the Guelph Correctional Centre and was a very involved and passionate supporter of the Royal Canadian Legion.

Pat was a school bus driver and a community leader on school bus safety issues. She continued her interest in traffic safety in retirement. Over 600 seniors have attended the seniors' driving seminars that Pat initiated at the Evergreen Seniors Centre.

Pat was no stranger to this Legislature. During the 1950s, Pat was part of a group that picketed this Legislature to convince the government of the day to allow residents of a Guelph housing development to purchase their own homes. Many seniors in Pat's neighbourhood are homeowners today because of Pat's efforts on their behalf.

Pat also took on Ford Canada when she felt her new car turned into a rust bucket too soon after she purchased it. Pat will—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Thank you very much.

WINE INDUSTRY

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): I rise today to express my concern about the Liberal government's lack of attention to the priorities of working families in the Niagara Peninsula. It's been almost a year now and we've seen no movement on the mid-peninsula corridor—in fact it has gone backward—little help to relieve truck congestion along the border, and not a single word of funding for the new West Lincoln Memorial Hospital.

One area I'd expect the government to move on, and it's an easy one that would help out with the greenbelt initiative, is Ontario VQA wine stores. I know, when asked for his position on it, the Minister of Agriculture was supportive and other members were supportive, but we still have not seen it move forward as a government initiative.

I know the Minister of Consumer and Business Services has dusted off other projects that have been there from only a few months ago, taken them as his own and moved them through the Legislature. Good for you, sir, but only one more initiative; I ask you to move this forward as well. It's good for the economy, it's good for jobs, it's good for tourism and it's good for agriculture.

I know the minister will get all kinds of warnings about trade issues—I've heard them before—but in British Columbia, in November, they announced a 20% increase in their VQA-only stores. I know states like Pennsylvania, New York and Virginia have unique stores highlighting their own locally grown wine.

It's time for the Ontario government to uncork the potential of our wine industry and open the VQA-only wine stores. If you pass it, it's also good for the government. I don't mind sharing these ideas with you from time to time.

HINTONBURG COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): I rise today to salute an amazing community builder in my riding of Ottawa Centre, the Hintonburg Community Association. Many of us would be overwhelmed and perhaps even defeated by the torrent of drugs and prostitution in our neighbourhood, but not the residents of Hintonburg.

In recent months the Hintonburg Community Association leaders have organized walkabouts in order to pressure governments to clean up crack houses and to keep prostitutes away from schoolyards and out of residential areas. They've also initiated Needle Hunters in Ottawa, where cleanup of drug debris from playgrounds takes place, and a community justice forum to reconcile criminals and victims; and they've established Ottawa's first John school, whose attendees fund an educational program to help prostitutes reform their lives. If that were not enough, they're also planning to strengthen the artistic and theatrical presence in their immediate neighbourhood. This is the Hintonburg formula for reclaiming their neighbourhood.

I say to them, your fierce persistence, community solidarity and unique spirit, forged in adversity, are turning Hintonburg around. Your energy and commitment have made an absolute difference on Pinhey, Melrose and Wellington Streets and at Devonshire, Connaught and Saint-François-d'Assise schools. For an area that was fast becoming a sad blight, Hintonburg is now a dynamic community that is determined to take control of its own destiny. To parents, volunteers and the feisty leaders of the Hintonburg Community Association I say bravo. You are very special people indeed.

1340

HEALTH PREMIUMS

Mr John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): What a shock it has been for members of our armed forces, of whom over 4,000 are stationed in my riding of Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, at CFB Petawawa, to find out that the McGuinty government was instituting a health tax, one which would be spent on any number of non-health-related projects, and that the tax would be levied against them even though the province does not pay for their health care. This is yet another example of this Liberal government's insatiable addiction to taxation. This government wants your money by any means. All Ontarians have come to realize that fact.

What a double whammy for our military and RCMP personnel to get the news that in spite of the fact that they do not receive their health care from the province, they would still have to pay this tax. The health care of members of the military and the RCMP is the sole responsibility of the federal government. This wrong and punitive decision of the McGuinty Liberal government, that is costing all working families in Ontario, is now forcing soldiers and police officers to pay twice.

This decision is at the very least a violation of the spirit of the Canada Health Act. Both British Columbia and Alberta, two other provinces that charge health care premiums, specifically exempt members of the Canadian Armed Forces and the RCMP from paying these premiums. I insist that the McGuinty government reverse this decision and exempt those who put their lives on the line for us every day from paying for a service that they do not receive.

NURSES

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): On August 19, the Premier visited the Windsor Regional Hospital to mark a turning point in Ontario's health care system. He was there to talk about nurses who were coming back to Ontario to work in their field instead of heading to the US.

Those nurses were part of a group of 14 new, full-time nurses who were hired with the funding this government has provided province-wide. The government is investing \$50 million in more full-time jobs for nurses. That means full-time jobs for new nurses and part-time nurses. Having more nurses means that the people in Windsor-Essex are getting the care they need when they need it. It means fewer bed shortages and shorter wait times.

The same is true for cities across Ontario. More full-time nurses means that I can tell nursing students in Windsor-Essex who have come to me with their concerns about the availability of full-time work in Ontario, and who would choose to stay, work and live in Windsor-Essex, that the opportunities exist for them.

I say, don't make any plans to head south just yet. Things are changing for nurses in Windsor and across the province. The Windsor Regional Hospital is a living, breathing, nursing proof that there is more work for full-time nurses in Ontario thanks to the McGuinty government.

ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES LEGISLATION

Mr Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): I want to take this opportunity to express my dismay with the irresponsible comments made yesterday by a member of the NDP regarding the government's new ODA legislation. He called the legislation a PR exercise. He said it didn't offer optimism to the disabled. Clearly, he wasn't listening to any actual members of the disabled community.

David Lepofsky, chair of the Ontarians with Disabilities Act Committee, called the new legislation very good because it "requires standards" and "provides a time line in which it has to be done. This law requires things to get started now."

Mr Lepofsky said the legislation "includes the key ingredients that we have been working for." He said the legislation "keeps the Premier's promise" to "sit down and work with the disabilities community, with the business community and the municipalities to develop legis-

lation." He concluded that the Premier "promised the legislation will be brought forward within a year [and] that's what's happened today."

Shame on the NDP for not listening to the disabled community, but instead, engaging in the politics of irresponsible opposition. I would like to point out that when the NDP was in government, they failed to make any improvements for people with disabilities in this province. Had their government addressed this issue then, disabled people across this province would be much closer to a barrier-free lifestyle today. Instead, their government did nothing to improve accessibility for Ontarians.

In contrast to their party, in contrast to the party opposite, the McGuinty government is delivering real results. We're listening to Ontarians. The NDP should do the same.

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): I am pleased to rise today to assist the member from Burlington with his revisionist history. Yesterday, our government introduced the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. In referring to the legislation he introduced as minister, he said in response, "Not one amendment was tabled by your critic. That is a fact."

How wrong can he be? Or maybe he has just forgotten that since he has been a member for a long time, he hasn't been a minister. So let me remind the member of what actually happened.

In opposition, my friends Steve Peters and Ernie Parsons worked long and hard to fix your legislation. We brought in over 100 amendments to try to help you fix your bill, but you wouldn't listen and you voted all of them down. You had your chance and you failed. Now the disabled community doesn't have to wait any longer.

The member from Burlington might want to hear what the disabled community had to say about this piece of legislation and the McGuinty government's legislation. Yours, they say, was totally unenforceable. Ours has the enforcement mechanisms built in. Most of them told us, "This bill is actually a very good bill. This bill includes the key ingredients that we have been looking for. This bill keeps the Premier's promises."

To the member from Burlington, I would like to have had you accept those amendments in 2001 instead of voting against them. The disabled community would have been further ahead. But today they will be, thanks to the McGuinty government.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): I would ask all members to join me in welcoming this group of legislative pages serving in the first session of the 38th Parliament. They are: Arif Ali from Sarnia-Lambton, Emilie Brent from Kingston and the Islands, Ashley Casey from Hamilton East, Alexander Cassels from Nepean-Carleton, Kathryn Clark from Etobicoke-Lakeshore, Otto Cortés from Haliburton-Victoria-Brock, Rachele Fischer from Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey, Justin Forster from Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge, Brendon

Holder from Whitby-Ajax, Taylor Lew from Don Valley West, Emma Mauti from Eglinton-Lawrence, Anmol Metley from Brampton West-Mississauga, Alyscha Mottershead from Brampton Centre, Geneva Neal from Huron-Bruce, Norah Paton from Ottawa Centre, Anthony Prail from Chatham-Kent Essex, Inez Roelen from Elgin-Middlesex-London, Gabriella Silano from Oak Ridges, John Steadman from Halton, and Chris Thompson from Kitchener Centre.

Will you all join me in welcoming these new pages.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the report on intended appointments dated October 13, 2004, of the standing committee on government agencies. Pursuant to standing order 106(e)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by this House.

1350

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY AMENDMENT ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE

Mr O'Toole moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 121, An Act to amend the Legislative Assembly Act / Projet de loi 121, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'Assemblée législative.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): My constituents in the riding of Durham, our leader, John Tory, and our Speaker expect no less than decorum and behaviour in respect for the traditions of this House. This bill goes a long way to making sure this place is a better place for all Ontarians.

CORPORATIONS TAX AMENDMENT ACT (FINES AND PENALTIES NOT DEDUCTIBLE), 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'IMPOSITION DES CORPORATIONS (AMENDES ET PÉNALITÉS NON DÉDUCTIBLES)

Ms Churley moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 122, An Act to amend the Corporations Tax Act to provide that fines and penalties are not deductible / Projet de loi 122, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'imposition des corporations afin de prévoir que les amendes et pénalités ne sont pas déductibles.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): The other title to this bill is the Make Polluters Pay Act. I entitled the bill this because I don't know if you're aware, but right now, if environmental firms are fined under the Occupational Health and Safety Act all of those, they can get the fines back through a loophole in the taxes. What this bill does is close the tax loophole. For instance, when the government recently announced higher fines for polluters, the reality is that they can get that money back through their income tax. This bill will change that once and forever.

I would ask for unanimous consent to pass this bill right now.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Second and third reading.

Ms Churley: Yes, unanimous consent for second and third reading right now, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: Ms Churley has moved for second and third reading. Is there consent? I do not hear consent.

TRANSPARENCY IN PUBLIC MATTERS ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 SUR LA TRANSPARENCE DES QUESTIONS D'INTÉRÊT PUBLIC

Ms DiCocco moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 123, An Act to require that meetings of provincial and municipal boards, commissions and other public bodies be open to the public / Projet de loi 123, Loi exigeant que les réunions des commissions et conseils provinciaux et municipaux et d'autres organismes publics soient ouvertes au public.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): The bill designates certain public bodies and requires those designated public bodies to give reasonable notice of their meetings to the public and ensure that the meetings are open to the public. The bill establishes procedures by which a person who believes a designated public body has contravened or is about to contravene the bill may make complaint to the Information and Privacy Commissioner. And the bill authorizes the commissioner to make certain orders after a review, including an order to void the decision made by a designated public body at a meeting that did not conform to the requirement of open meetings.

ORAL QUESTIONS

LIBERAL CAMPAIGN PROMISES

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leader of the Opposition): I have a question for the Premier. Today I'd like to revisit an issue raised with you yesterday by the member for

Whitby-Ajax, and that is the Ministry of Finance's 60-page costing of the Liberal Party's election promises.

You and your Minister of Finance have followed the advice of your spin doctors and your new media guru and portrayed the document as meaningless and demeaned the civil servants who prepared it. Premier, can you advise us why a document you believe is worthless, prepared by people your finance minister scoffingly described as mid-level bureaucrats, was kept under lock and key for a year? Why do you fight tooth and nail to prevent disclosure of a worthless document?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs): If this is the single, most pressing issue that weighs heavily on the minds of Ontario families, then I will be delighted to address it again.

What I said, to be perfectly clear, is that, to use the words of the Deputy Minister of Finance, to tally up the figures presented in that document would be wrong and misleading. He specifically said in addition to that, "So if somebody were to go through and just add up the columns—that can be done—it would be information that's actually meaningless." That's what the Deputy Minister of Finance said. I attach a heavy weight to the advice and the opinion and the independence of our public service, but particularly the Deputy Minister of Finance.

Mr Runciman: Clearly, there was no answer to my question in that response.

We believe this document is critically important in exposing the *modus operandi* of this Liberal government. They're already tarred with the brand "Fiberal," and their handling of this issue reinforces that description.

The Minister of Finance, while dismissing a document he fought to keep out of public view for a year, says he never saw it. He wants us to believe he prepared his budget in total ignorance of his own ministry's costing conclusions. Nobody told him. He was kept in the dark. What he was in was deniability mode: "Tell me, but don't show me."

Premier, will you advise us who in your government, including your transition team, actually had the courage to review the document last fall?

Hon Mr McGuinty: I'll tell you, when this member tells us that somehow we should have some courage over here, they should have had the courage, they should have had the gumption, they should have had the honesty to own up to the fact that they saddled the people of Ontario with a \$5.6-billion deficit. Now we have to clean up their mess, and we will do that as diligently and responsibly as we can. But when it comes to admitting what it is we had by way of information, we'll take no lessons from this former government, which hid the fact from the people of Ontario that they had a massive deficit.

1400

Mr Runciman: Another refusal to answer a question. Check the calendar. You've been in office for a year.

Premier, we all know you've broken significant and solemn promises that you made to the people of Ontario.

You are now mistrusted by many Ontarians. Your reaction to this document, first to attempt a cover-up and, when that fails, to dismiss and demean its conclusions and its authors, simply re-enforces a growing view that your party was elected on false premises. It re-enforces the view that your extravagant election promises were purposely and dramatically underestimated to hoodwink voters. It raises alarms that you prepared and presented a budget that dramatically increased spending, knowing your promises could cost three to four times as much as you told voters. Premier, will you commit to the members of the House and to the citizens of Ontario that your government will not exceed your campaign commitments, not a penny more? Will you do that?

Hon Mr McGuinty: The member opposite refuses to acknowledge, understand and accept that the authors of this same report have described it as wrong and misleading and that it would be, again, meaningless to tally up the numbers found within that document.

What the Conservatives would like us to forget is that they actually promised to outspend us. Just so the record is clear, in their platform they promised to outspend us in both health care and education. They also said they were going to cut taxes by another \$5 billion. They also said they were going to find another \$5 billion to pay down the debt. They said all that notwithstanding the fact that they were hiding a \$5.6-billion deficit from the people of Ontario.

I leave it to you, Speaker, and the good people of this province to draw their own conclusions with respect to who is telling the truth when it comes to the numbers.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): New question, the member for Whitby-Ajax.

Interjections.

Mr Jim Flaherty (Whitby-Ajax): Thank you, Speaker, and I thank the Minister of Tourism, who really wants to be the minister of other things. But I'm glad you're here. It's good to see you.

The Speaker: And the question is?

TAXATION

Mr Jim Flaherty (Whitby-Ajax): My question is not to the Minister of Tourism but to the Premier, and it's about your promises and the economy of the province of Ontario, which is a serious matter. We know your \$5.9-billion, fully costed 231 promises are now more like \$18 billion, according to the Ministry of Finance. We know your promise number 65 to balance the budget and keep down taxes has been broken, that number 226 to hold the line on taxes has been broken, that 227 not to raise the debt has been broken. The whopper, of course, the pledge you signed at the Sheraton Centre in Toronto not to raise taxes, has also been broken. We have had the fact of the largest single tax increase on one day in the history of Ontario by your government in its first year in office. We have a new so-called health tax, but we have fewer health services. So the motto now is, "Pay more, get less in Ontario."

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Question?

My question is, will you now stand in your place and assure the people of the province, heavily taxed as they are today, that during the course of your mandate there will be no more tax increases?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): Not surprisingly, this particular member is so negative when it comes to Ontario and our opportunities and potential. There are a couple of numbers I'm sure he would be interested in, reluctant though he may be to accept their validity. Since we've been on the job and formed the government, some 80,000 new jobs have been created in Ontario. I am also very pleased to report that this month we have the lowest unemployment rate in Ontario in three years. We've only just begun.

Mr Flaherty: There's no assurance to the people of Ontario that there will not be further tax increases, so they might as well get ready for that.

It doesn't take any skill, of course, to raise taxes. Anyone can raise taxes. It does take skill to control spending. We look at your first year in office and what we see on the spending side is health spending at \$29 billion, the two education ministries \$13.8 billion, community and social services—they add up to \$51 billion in spending. Health care spending is growing at 8% per annum. On top of that, you decided to go on a more than \$4-billion spending spree. You know the average revenue increases, according to your own document, your own economic projection, are about \$4 billion. You squandered that on a spending spree.

My question to you on spending is—your Minister of Finance talks about cost containment after a loss in year one—what is your plan for the people of Ontario to control costs in these three large areas during the course of your second year in office?

Hon Mr McGuinty: It's not surprising that this member in particular takes great issue with our investment in better-quality public services. He objects to investing, for example, in hiring more meat inspectors, in hiring more water inspectors. He objects to our initial investment in nurses. We hired 1,100 new teachers on the job this September.

By way of cuts to government expenditures, we are proud of the fact that we have cancelled corporate tax cuts to the tune of some \$2.5 billion, we have cancelled investments in private schools, we have cancelled expenditures on partisan political advertising. We will continue to make investments where they count. We will make them in such a way that we can get measurable improvement, actual results. For example, we have smaller classes in close to 38% of our elementary schools as of this September, 1,100 new teachers on the job, close to 8,000 new lead teachers working inside our elementary schools. Those are the kinds of investments we're making, and we're getting real results for the people of Ontario.

Mr Flaherty: What we have so far is that there might be tax increases during the rest of the mandate and that

there is no plan to control spending in these three large areas of government going forward.

I want to ask about jobs now, economic growth in the province of Ontario, and your government's mismanagement in terms of investment in job creation. You talk about job statistics. The jobs stats from last week: "In September, employment in Ontario was little changed, leaving gains so far this year at only 0.9%," less than 1%, only 55,000 jobs. Worse than that, in manufacturing, in light industry, in the private sector, jobs are down in your mandate in Ontario so far in 2004. Employment rose in the provincial government and in education services for teachers. Those are the statistics.

So what we have in year one is poor economic growth in terms of jobs. Spending is up. Taxes are up. The debt is up. Interest payments are up. Will you assure the people of Ontario, the entrepreneurs, the business people, that you will abandon this tax-and-spend policy and try to create jobs?

Hon Mr McGuinty: The member opposite just can't handle good news: 80,000 net new jobs since we formed the government. The minister of industry tells me here that we had 4,700 new jobs in September.

It's unfortunate—I attended an event recently, and it would have been good if the member himself could have been there. It was an economic summit hosted by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, and they have put a heavy emphasis on health care, additional investments in health care, because not only does that give expression to us as a caring society but it makes us competitive. It's very important to our businesses. They also said it's important that we continue to invest in education. They want to see greater investment in post-secondary education in particular, because if we build a strong, highly skilled and talented workforce, we'll land the best jobs at the best pay.

This member doesn't understand that the economy has moved beyond this notion that the only thing we can do to strengthen it is to cut taxes and race to the bottom with low-wage jobs. We are working to build a high-wage economy with the best jobs by investing in health care, education and a strong economy.

HEPATITIS C

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. Yesterday, we demonstrated that your government is misusing dedicated federal health care money for hepatitis C victims in a most troubling and unfair way. Under the 1998 agreement, the forgotten hepatitis C victims were to receive enhanced health care services over and above what they have already received through OHIP or existing prescription drug programs. So far, Ontario has received \$66.3 million of dedicated federal health care money to pay for enhanced health care services for those hepatitis C victims, but your own report shows that not a penny of that federal health care money has been used to provide the enhanced health care services that were supposed to occur. Instead, for the past year you followed the dis-

credited and mean-spirited policy of the former Conservative government, something you said you wouldn't do. You said, "Choose change" in the election. Where is the change for hepatitis C victims, Premier?

1410

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs): I'll refer this to the Minister of Health.

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Yesterday, in response to the same assertions made by the honourable member, I clearly said what I will say again today. Perhaps this time he'll pick up on it.

Yesterday, he alleged that the province of Manitoba, as an example, has a more expansive program with respect to people with hepatitis C than we have here in Ontario. I said yesterday that that was untrue, and I have further evidence that this is the case.

You used examples of drugs, including interferon, as examples of what Manitoba is doing. The fact of the matter remains very clear. Here in Ontario, we are obligated to work with people who have hepatitis C, and who are at risk of getting hepatitis C, to prevent that. The assurance that I gave Ontarians and I repeat today is that we are going to continue to make sure that people with hepatitis C in this province gain all of the benefit that our health care system can provide, because Ontario's standard will be the highest standard in the land.

Mr Hampton: It doesn't surprise me that the Premier doesn't want to answer this question, because it was the Premier's promise. It was the Premier who used to criticize the Conservatives for taking dedicated federal health care money and simply putting it in general revenues and not spending it on health care services. The real issue is that the McGuinty government has betrayed some of Ontario's most vulnerable citizens during their time of need.

Take Roy Royceppen, for example. He contracted hepatitis C in 1983 through a blood transfusion following heart surgery at Toronto General Hospital and more recently has developed diabetes through hepatitis C complications. He now requires daily dialysis because of his condition, and over the last few years has incurred several thousand dollars in out-of-pocket health care expenses for dialysis-related travel expenses, insulin and needles related to the diabetes. There are thousands of victims like him, yet your government continues to pocket the federal health care dollars that were supposed to help him pay for these additional health care expenses. I ask, where is the change for Roy Royceppen? Where is the change for thousands of other hepatitis C victims?

Hon Mr Smitherman: A couple of weeks ago, we had the opportunity to demonstrate that the money the federal government sent to the province of Ontario for the purpose of enhancing the quality of care for people with hepatitis C has in very clear fact been spent on the expansion of health care services.

The honourable member in his own question makes the point, as an example, about the need for expanded

dialysis services. The record is clear that over the course of the agreement with the federal government—a legal agreement was entered into between the province and the federal government, and that was to use the money to the benefit of people with hepatitis C through provision of services through our health care system, and that is what has been done.

Further, we've asked John Plater, who is a leader in this community, to help bring together a group to develop an even better strategic plan for the purpose of hepatitis C in our province. We're creating a hepatitis C secretariat at the ministry to more effectively coordinate the provision of these services. I remain of the opinion that here in Ontario, the obligation we have is to make sure that people with hepatitis C receive the best possible services available—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr Hampton: I remember when Dalton McGuinty used to rise and criticize the former Conservative government for taking dedicated health care funds and simply putting them in general revenues. Now we have the McGuinty government taking dedicated federal health care funds intended to provide enhanced health care services for unfortunate hepatitis C victims, and we have the Minister of Health standing and saying that's OK, that's all right. What's happened here is these unfortunate victims have had to pay out of their own pocket while this government pockets the money that was intended to pay for their health care services.

Minister, you don't need another study. What you need to do is admit that you are wrong, just as the Conservatives were wrong. You need to pay back the money that was wrongly denied these hepatitis C victims and you need to put in place now the enhanced services for hepatitis C victims that were promised and that are part of the spirit and letter of this agreement. Will you do that or are you simply going to—

The Speaker: Thank you. Minister of Health.

Hon Mr Smitherman: On the issue of who is wrong, it's the honourable member. He says, "Follow the letter and the spirit of the agreement." In reading the agreement, what is absolutely clear is that Ontario, like all other provinces, was provided with funding by the federal government for the provision of health care services. Simply, what we did, based on a methodology developed by people who are expert in the field of providing services to people with hepatitis C, was demonstrate that all of the dollars had been spent on enhancing the quality of care for people with hepatitis C.

But we're going one step further. We're working with people from the hepatitis C community to enhance the quality of care through the work being done on a strategic plan. The fact of the matter is, I arrived as Minister of Health to find that the strategic plan work that had been done by the previous government had not involved all of those communities that are affected and those people who are infected with hepatitis C. We're updating that work quickly under the leadership of a man named

John Plater, who stands in very high regard on this issue. I repeat what I've said before—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question?

OMA AGREEMENT

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): To the Premier: You already have a credibility problem when it comes to health care. Before the election, you said that a health care premium would be unfair and regressive for working families. Then you imposed a health care premium. Before the election you said you would never cut health services. After the election, you cut chiropractors, physiotherapists and optometrists. Now we find your government pocketing the money that was dedicated to provide enhanced health care services for hepatitis C victims. Moreover, we find more and more of the details of your secret deal with the OMA.

Last night, TVO's Susanna Kelley reported that, over four years, sole-practice general practitioners will get an 11% raise, those in health groups a 25% pay increase and those in health care networks a 36% pay increase. Those are very big numbers, Premier. Will you tell the people of Ontario what the bottom line is, or is your credibility on health care going to continue to suffer because you can't meet—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Premier.

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs): We're very proud of this deal, and I know the member opposite will be very interested in learning more about this deal. It has been made public, so the parties have agreed that we can talk about it in some detail. We're very proud of this deal.

To my understanding, and I'll let the minister answer the supplementary, this is the first deal in the history of this province where there is no across-the-board increase. What we decided to do is to incent the kinds of activities on the part of doctors which will encourage them to do the kinds of things we need them to do. It will result in more doctors working in group practices. It will result in shorter waits, in particular for different kinds of surgeries; hip and knee, for example. It will result in getting doctors, for example, to do on-call work for our long-term-care centres. It will result in shorter waits in our emergency rooms and the like.

It's a creative deal. We have been very imaginative in terms of the kind of approach we've brought, and we are convinced that as a result of this new arrangement we have with Ontario doctors, we're going to actually end up with more doctors practising in a better way that helps us control the costs in health care and brings better care closer to the community.

1420

Mr Hampton: Premier, the question is this: Are you prepared to release this secret OMA deal so that the people of Ontario won't find some more nasty surprises in it, just as they have found with your nasty surprises in terms of health care announcements already? You have a credibility problem. Most people would find it hard to

swallow an 11% increase, but a 25% increase, a 35% increase? Meanwhile, you're telling nurses and other hospital personnel, and teachers and other people in the broader public sector, 2%.

I think, before people find this is a done deal, they deserve to know just what is being bargained here, what is being negotiated here and how fair it is. Premier, don't you think the people who will foot the bill deserve to know that?

Hon Mr McGuinty: I will refer this to the minister.

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Over four years, 4.8% for a doctor who practises in a walk-in clinic. The point here is clear: This is a landmark agreement. Those people who have sought to characterize it as across-the-board increases are just plain wrong. This is an agreement that for the first time aligns the government of Ontario's priorities with our negotiated agreement with the Ontario Medical Association. It incents and rewards different behaviours in three specific areas.

That party, while in government, shut off the supply of doctors to local communities. Under their leadership, it went from 60 underserved communities to 122. This agreement will reverse that trend. Doctors will return to practise in Ontario communities. Doctors will provide more service and address our wait-time challenges, and fundamentally, resources will be invested at the community level, upstream, so doctors are involved again in the provision of comprehensive care to prevent people from getting diabetes, to prevent people from getting cancer. This is a landmark agreement—

The Speaker: Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr Hampton: I think most people across Ontario would be alarmed at a 25% increase or a 35% to 36% increase. I think most people would be alarmed at that. I think the people of Ontario deserve to know what is in this agreement before you hit them with another one of your nasty surprises, before you tell them one thing before the agreement and then they find out something quite nasty after the agreement. I think those people out there who are being told 2%, and no more, deserve to know what is in this agreement. The taxpayers deserve to know what is in this agreement because ultimately they're going to have to foot the bill.

Why are you creating two classes of health care workers in Ontario? Why won't you release this agreement now so the people of Ontario can see what you're negotiating and how nasty the surprise is going to be after the agreement?

Hon Mr Smitherman: What's at stake is a better class of health care for the people of Ontario. If there's something to be alarmed about and if there is something to consider nasty, it's the decisions your party made while in government. Communities all across this province that can't get access to a family doctor, that have seen their community designated as underserved, should know from here forward that that party is stuck in the status quo. But this party as a government is not, because we fundamentally believe that the best health

care is the health care you find as close to home as possible.

So I ask the member in his supplementaries to stand in his place and say, do you oppose the idea that doctors should provide more services in long-term-care facilities? Because that's what this deal does. Do you oppose the idea that doctors should be incented and provided the opportunity to provide more help to people to deal with weight problems, like me, or to deal with too many people who smoke? Are these the things the honourable member supports or not?

The fact of the matter is, this is a landmark agreement. It's a historic agreement because it reaches out to change the nature of health care delivery, and consistent with the exact approach—

The Speaker: Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Let me remind the minister that when I stand up I'd like you to sit down. That means, sir, you should stop your answer. New question.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): My question is for the Minister of Health. You, your Premier and your Minister of Finance have been going to every corner of this province and telling our teachers, police officers and Ontario's valued public servants to hold the line and be realistic when it comes to salary expectations. We now learn from TV Ontario and Sue Kelley that through your secret deal with doctors, you plan to give salary increases of not just 11% but as much as 25% and 36% to some classes of physicians in Ontario. Your secret deal, the cat, is now out of the bag. How can you beat down all our other valued public employees and give doctors such a huge salary increase? Can you tell us that?

Hon Mr Smitherman: Here's what I can tell the honourable member: For those communities—they went from 60 to 122 on their watch—designated as underserved, in those places all across Ontario where we know people, sometimes staff members and family members, haven't been able to gain access to doctors in this province, we have worked on an historic agreement that sends a message to doctors in this province for the first time in a long, long time that we want to be your partners in the delivery of health care, that we need you occupied on the front lines of health care, helping people to stay healthy in the first place and giving them care as close to home as possible, in their local communities, in a way that has been evaporating under their watch and under their watch, for more than a decade now.

This is an agreement that sends a signal of hope to the people of Ontario that has been long overdue. We have, in this agreement, sought and achieved the restoration of the vitality and viability of family practice in this province, something that both of you, while in government, ran roughshod over.

Mr Baird: How can patients and taxpayers trust you to do what's right and what's in the best interests of taxpayers and our health care system? Here's what you said just last week before a standing committee: "I'll send this message very clearly ... as I have on many occasions:

The levels of salary increases that were raised in the question are not appropriate numbers to be discussed in the current environment. It's an era of restraint."

I was using a number of 6% to 10%. Now we learn that in your secret deal some physicians in this province will get a 35% pay increase, when at the same time you were asking the hospitals in my community to make do with 0.6%, or 1.8% at The Ottawa Hospital. How do you have any credibility, and how can taxpayers and other health care workers trust you to do what's in the best interests of our health care system?

Hon Mr Smitherman: It's an interesting question coming from a member of the cabinet of a party that, while in government, saw the communities that were underserved from the standpoint of doctors go from 60 to 122—and he asks me that question. The member wishes to characterize this as a raise, but the fact of the matter is this is an agreement that seeks to change the way doctors do business in Ontario. It asks of them to change the nature of their practice, to work together in teams, to provide comprehensive 24/7 care, and to assist our 12 million patients in staying healthy in the first place. This is a landmark agreement. Nobody earns increases in this agreement without changing the nature of the way they practise, transforming health care, providing more resources upstream and in communities—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

HYDRO GENERATION

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. During the election you promised to keep our hydroelectricity system in public hands. You said that new generation would be public, that it would be by OPG, and you promised power at cost. Somewhere here you must have suffered a post-election promise blackout, because now you say that new generation will come from private, profit-driven companies and that electricity will be sold at higher market prices. During the election and before the election you said, "Choose change," so why are you repeating now the failed Conservative model that saddled ordinary Ontarians with skyrocketing prices and supply shortages? What happened to the promise of public power? Why do you now prefer a privately owned, profit-driven supply of electricity?

1430

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): To the Minister of Energy.

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): This government has not privatized a single asset. It's completely false, number one. Number two, the one decision this government did take was to reverse a decision to privatize the nuclear inspection service of OPG. That was one of the first decisions we took. We reject out of hand the notion that we're privatizing. I don't know where you get it from. Name me one asset that we've privatized.

We are consistent with what we said before the election. We are doing precisely what we said before the

election. We have moved forward to try to rescue a system that was left with no new generation, higher prices, poorly managed assets, and we're trying to correct that. Make no mistake: The commitments Premier McGuinty made in the election are being kept. Nothing has been privatized. Number two, the only decision we have taken was to reverse the decision to privatize nuclear inspection services. If you can point out one asset we've privatized anywhere in hydroelectric, please name it.

Mr Hampton: Premier, you must have seen this letter to you in the *Globe and Mail*: "An open letter to Dalton McGuinty: Don't Pull the Plug on Ontario's Future." It's a letter from, for example, Rod Anderson, national director of—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order. You know the rules about props.

Mr Hampton: I'm reading a letter, Speaker.

The Speaker: But you know the rules about props. I ask you to exercise discretion.

Mr Hampton: It's a letter to the Premier. It is from Ron Bartholomew, vice-president of production, retired, Ontario Hydro; Myron Gordon, one of the pre-eminent economists—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I'm having difficulty hearing the leader of the third party.

Mr Hampton: This is what they say, and I think you'd agree these are very learned people. They say that Premier McGuinty's Bill 100 follows "the same old failed and discredited electricity program" as the Conservatives'. They warn that your plan "will increase consumer electricity rates dramatically, and force electricity-reliant industries to move production out of Ontario, taking good jobs with them." And they say the best way forward is to "give Hydro One and Ontario Power Generation the mandate to provide power at cost for the people of Ontario."

Premier, before the election you said, "Public power." You said, "All new generation will be publicly owned and operated on a not-for-profit basis." Now are you breaking that promise, too?

Hon Mr Duncan: First of all, I reject everything that was put in that letter. The same group on August 24 put out a press release that congratulated Minister Duncan "for recognizing that privatization is not a viable option for Ontario." That was after they made their appearance before the legislative committee and saw the bill and had been briefed about the bill and had met with me. That's their press release, not mine.

The so-called expert they brought in, when questioned by me when I met with them on the record in Windsor, said he hadn't studied the history of Ontario Hydro, hadn't looked at the history of Ontario Hydro.

Let me be clear. This government will not go back to the old public monopoly. It was a failure. It left this province \$38 billion in debt. Your government cancelled conservation programs. Their government left a mess. They're voting against the bill because they think we're undoing what they did. You people just aren't consistent.

This government made a commitment to change, and we're changing for the better. I reject the old Ontario Hydro model and I reject the old Ontario Hydro vice-presidents who want to go back to it. It didn't work. We're fixing it. We're cleaning up the mess that you, and the Conservatives after you, left this province in on the hydroelectric file.

CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

Ms Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek): My question is for the Attorney General. This past winter, I supported the Hamilton Police Service in its application for funding through the victims' justice fund to increase the ability of the Hamilton police to fight child pornography in the area. That bid for funding was denied; however, I was assured that our government was addressing the situation and actively dealing with the problem of how police and courts tackle child pornography, especially through the Internet, which we all know is the Wild West. There is a need for a sheriff in the Wild West. Can you tell me what your ministry is doing to address the problem?

Hon Michael Bryant (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): I thank the member for Stoney Creek for her question. We've talked about this a number of times, and you have insisted that your community get the protection from our law enforcement that will ensure that, no matter where you live in the province, no matter whether you're in Stoney Creek or Sudbury or Sault Ste Marie, your kids are getting the full force of the brightest and the best people and technology from our law enforcement.

This announcement today is good news for your community. It fulfills the important commitment that the victims' justice fund must fulfill. It means that, for the first time, we're going to have a provincial strategy that will deal with Internet crime against kids and deal with Internet luring. Through our task force on Internet crime against kids, we are working with the industry and ISPs to try to make our Internet safer for kids and to try to better crack down on those who proliferate child pornography.

Ms Mossop: I do understand that the Internet is an international issue, not a local one, but I need to know that the Hamilton Police Service has what it needs to protect the children of Hamilton and to keep them safe.

Hon Mr Bryant: I think I'll refer this to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services): This government is committed to stamping out child pornography and luring on the Internet. This morning's announcement is really a major step to achieve that goal. What we have done is taken the OPP Project P department, which is the lead organization in Ontario, in conjunction with the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, and they're going to come forward with a strategy to effectively deal with this.

As part of the announcement, the Attorney General announced that up to \$5 million will be available for this project. The key thing for Ontario is that Internet luring is a major issue.

You're talking about Hamilton. I'd like to quote from the chief of the Hamilton police, Mr Brian Mullan:

"Internet porn knows no boundaries in exploiting the most vulnerable in our society—our children. We recognize that Ontarians are looking to their police services to fight these reprehensible crimes.

"A provincial strategy that addresses the diverse needs of police services and their communities will help in this fight."

That is by the chief.

CLASS SIZE

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): My question is to the Minister of Education. The purpose of my question is to give the minister an opportunity to clarify for the House and for people in this province the discrepancy of some \$600 million between what he says it'll cost to implement the hard cap class size for JK to grade 3 and what a ministry document says.

1440

The minister has told us that his projection for implementation of this policy is \$375 million. This ministry document, which finance lawyers have spent the better part of a year suppressing, tells us that they project the cost to be in excess of \$1 billion, and that doesn't include any capital costs.

What I'd like the minister to do, because I think it's important, and I'm sure he will agree, that we know what the true cost of this policy commitment is: I'd like the minister to stand today and tell us whether he is right or whether ministry officials are right in terms of this cost projection.

Hon Gerard Kennedy (Minister of Education): To the member opposite, I'm sure he would like to acknowledge the fact that, rapidly under our government, there has been a reduction in class sizes across this province. In fact, for the first time in way too many years, teachers are able to pay individualized attention to those students. They're doing that under a careful plan, a plan that was put together with wide consultation and now has an expert committee, struck for the last six months, looking at all the implications of doing this carefully over four years, and at the price tag we talked about.

There is a gloom-and-doom that permeates the members opposite when it comes to public services. They showed us that when they were in government. They had no idea how to get better public education to happen. They knew a lot about private schools; they tried to promote those.

We have brought down class sizes, we are getting improved results with literacy and numeracy, and we're going to do that, improving the government services we provide, including the cost-effectiveness, as we go along.

Mr Klees: Speaker, I don't know if you heard an answer here; I didn't. I'm simply saying, on behalf of members in this Legislature, who I believe have a right to know what this will cost, is the minister telling us that he as minister does not have a handle on what this policy is going to cost the Ministry of Education school boards across this province?

On Tuesday morning I was on a radio show with the minister and I was asked what my objective would be as critic. My response was, "To get this man to tell the truth." That is what my—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order. First I should get some order in here.

I'm sure the member from Oak Ridges would like to withdraw those comments.

Mr Klees: Yes, by all means; absolutely. I withdraw.

I am sure that the minister will stand in his place right now and tell us the truth about how much this will cost: \$375 million or \$1 billion-plus, the way ministry officials have put it. What is the price tag, Minister?

Hon Mr Kennedy: I'm happy to make it easy for him to fulfill his objective and go home today, because the truth is very simple. In fact, we are reducing class sizes. He's against that. He wants to tell those young families out there that they should not have their children get the attention they've been missing all this time. He stands, with his party, against kids getting that kind of attention.

For \$90 million this year—a significant investment, one that this government weighed very carefully and that this finance minister and this Premier supported, even in a constrained environment—we've reached 38% of our schools. It will cost us around \$375 million to reach all of them. We have that number. But more importantly, we have right now some opportunities on the way to helping every 12-year-old in this province to read, write and comprehend at a high level, children who have been held back by the antediluvian thinking of some of the members opposite, of which we've had a fine example.

Mr Klees: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'm going to request a late show from this minister—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Member from Oak Ridges, I hope you will submit the necessary papers for the late show.

ASSISTANCE TO DISABLED

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): My question is to the Minister of Finance. Minister, it may surprise you, but there are still some people in this province who believe you and your promises. One such foolish soul is Mr Jason Chenier, who lives in eastern Ontario. He went to your Ministry of Finance Web site and learned that there is a sales tax rebate for vehicles for the disabled. He got all the forms from your Web site. He filled them out. He and his wife went out and redid the entire van for their disabled son. They spent thousands of dollars. They filled out the forms, mailed them in and

awaited their cheque. Instead of a cheque, they got a letter from your officials saying that the program was cancelled. They're now stuck with a bill they can ill afford. What are you going to do about this program that is on your Web site?

Interjections.

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): I welcome a question from my friend from Beaches-East York. I'm going to try and answer it, but over the heckling from the former Conservative critic for finance, who is now looking for a portfolio to speak to.

My friend from Beaches-East York knows full well that we addressed that question in the budget last May 18. We made significant new investments to help, in a new and more effective way, people with disabilities. Most importantly, I say to my friend, yesterday my colleague the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration introduced an act that will transform life for those who are disabled in this province, and we are very proud of that. I can give him all sorts of detail—but I know you're concerned about time—about those new programs.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Supplementary, and I hope I can hear it this time.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Come to order, please.

Mr Prue: I went to the Web site today. This is the form you get. If this was in private enterprise, we would call this false advertising and the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs would have something to say about it.

The worst thing of all, though, is that Mr Chenier is a police officer. He knew that this was wrong and he went to his member of provincial Parliament, the member from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell, who wrote you a letter on September 27 telling you that your staff is misleading the public, and you have done absolutely nothing about it. I went there today; it's still there. You have let this family down. I want to know, what are you going to do to provide him with the money he can ill afford, or is this just another broken promise?

Hon Mr Sorbara: I want to tell my friend directly that if there is misinformation on our Web site, I will have that corrected as of today. I want to assure him of that. I want to assure him that there are literally hundreds and hundreds of programs delivered by this government, often now through the technology of the Internet. I clearly accept the possibility that the information about this program is in error, but I want to tell him that the program that replaced that program will have a much more positive impact on the lives of those in this province who are forced to live with disabilities, and we are very proud of that.

1450

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr Phil McNeely (Ottawa-Orléans): My question is for the Minister of Transportation. Orléans, which makes up 90% of my riding of Ottawa-Orléans, has experienced rapid growth over the last few years. The population is

now close to 100,000 people. Orléans remains a bedroom community; the jobs are in downtown Ottawa, south Ottawa, Nepean and Kanata. These same jobs are filled by residents from the east of my riding in Glengarry-Prescott-Russell, all of whom use Highway 174 and the split to access their jobs.

The split forms part of your environmental assessment study for the Queensway East and it has been at capacity for many years. The ministry has proposed a preferred alternative for modifications at the split, and the city of Ottawa has proposed improvements to Highway 174 going easterly.

My question, Minister, is about the Hunt Club Road interchange. This is important to us because it is our direct connection in Orléans to the Ottawa airport and is fundamental to providing alternative access to the south and west of Ottawa for the people of Orléans. Can you confirm that your ministry is prepared to undertake an environmental assessment for Hunt Club Road?

Hon Harinder S. Takhar (Minister of Transportation): The short answer to his question is yes, we have received a similar request from the city of Ottawa to do the environmental assessment, and I have asked my ministry to work with Ottawa to go ahead with the environmental assessment process for Hunt Club.

Mr McNeely: The second question is, when will the split improvements be designed so that improvements can be scheduled for this major transportation problem affecting the many people in Orléans?

Hon Mr Takhar: I want to let the honourable member know that the environmental assessment study for this important project is nearing completion. We anticipate filing the transportation environmental study report for public review and comment by mid-2005. I also want to tell the honourable member that we are moving forward with the planning and repair work on five bridges along Highway 417 in the west end of Ottawa. I want to assure the member that we are committed to making sure that Ottawa's transportation needs are met.

AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): My question is to the Minister of Agriculture. During the election you promised farmers you would develop a new generation of safety nets and companion programs to better address the needs of Ontario's farmers. We recently discovered that the public service has set the cost of these new programs at \$186 million in the first year alone, yet in the 2004 budget you slashed the ministry budget by 20% and took \$50 million out of the crop stabilization program. How are you going to stand up for Ontario's farmers when you and the Minister of Finance are ignoring the public service and making up your own numbers? Tell us, Minister, are you reneging on your promise to Ontario's farmers, or can we expect a \$180-million announcement in the next week or two?

Hon Steve Peters (Minister of Agriculture and Food): I really appreciate being lectured by a former minister who devastated the budget in the Ministry of

Agriculture. The very first year in office you cut the budget by \$12.8 million; in 1997-98, \$31.4 million; in 1998-99, \$62.8 million out of the budget. So you can't stand up and try to explain that you're a defender of the Ministry of Agriculture.

We have been working with the agricultural community in moving forward. We signed the agricultural policy framework in December, which is going to bring \$1.7 billion into this province for farmers. We're moving forward on companion programs. We have the new production insurance program in place, the new case program in place. We're in the process right now of transitioning to new programs, replacement for the market revenue insurance fund, and self-directed risk management.

So we are moving forward. We're working in conjunction, we are consulting, and we are going to have a new generation of safety nets for the farmers of this province.

Mr Hardeman: Minister, you said that part of the 20% budget cut was safety net bridge funding that had come to an end, but farmers have yet to see a penny of that money. Some \$45 million should have already been paid out on last year's, never mind the \$45 million owed this year. Industry leaders are saying your safety net distribution process is a mess and is overwhelming you. We see that you've promised \$186 million worth of safety net programs, and you can't even deliver the \$90 million of old money to those who desperately need it. Is this what the industry should expect from your tenure as minister: a messy, overwhelmed system with a government that can't make sound fiscal decisions?

Hon Mr Peters: I can tell you what the farmers of Ontario are going to get from this government, and that's a commitment to do things differently. Not across-the-board, and I think it's important, reduction—this is when they were in government. They reduced genetic improvement transfers, \$1.2 million; field services, \$4.8 million; reduced the safety net program budget by \$22.1 million; reduced ministry administration, \$4.4 million; \$7 million in spending cuts to the University of Guelph. So don't stand up and criticize us for what we are doing. We're moving forward.

As a result of the agricultural policy framework, there's what is known as transition dollars. That's \$173 million that is going to be moving forward as we transition from the existing programs that we have. We are going to move forward. We have been working with the Ontario Agricultural Commodity Council.

You know darn well, member, that we have been working with them and we're ensuring that we consult with farmers, unlike you, who just arbitrarily cut that budget without standing up and your rural caucus not standing up—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Thank you.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): My question is to the Minister of Health. Minister, you will know

that hospitals across northern Ontario like Sault Ste Marie, Timmins, Hearst, Smooth Rock Falls, Kapuskasing, and the list goes on, are all struggling to balance their budgets this year. All of them are saying that unless you find the money to shore up their budgets, they're going to have to lay off full-time staff and cut services in an area that is already very underserved.

I want to draw your attention to promise 126 of your election platform in the last election, that hospitals need immediate relief and long-term stability so patients can get better care. My question is simply this: Are you prepared to live up to your campaign commitment and fund hospitals so they don't have to lay off staff and cut services in northern Ontario?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): The member will know that Ontario hospitals are to submit their plans, and the ministry and the government will have the opportunity to review those and work with hospitals on getting them into balance. We inherited a situation where hospitals were in a chronic situation of needing bailouts at the end of the year. The fact of the matter is that in less than a year in office, we've contributed \$385 million to base funding and a second contribution, \$469.5 million, to base funding for Ontario hospitals. We've acknowledged working capital deficits—operating bills unpaid by that party while in government—totalling \$721 million, and we've made the largest single investment in community-based care designed to divert traffic from our hospitals.

We recognize they have challenging work to do. That's why we're going to work with them, starting on the 15th, when they submit their plans. I make the commitment to the honourable member that I'm mindful of the particular challenges in northern Ontario, especially for those small hospitals which have a smaller administrative base, and will be looking very, very carefully at the information as it comes in from Ontario hospitals. I look forward to continuing to hear from him on this matter.

PETITIONS

TAXATION

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I have received a number of petitions over the summertime. I have a petition to do with taxpayer protection.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the McGuinty government's 2004 budget will break the taxpayer protection law by not conducting a referendum on tax increases; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty signed an election pledge on September 11, 2003, not to raise taxes without the explicit consent of voters through a referendum; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty promised in TV ads not to raise taxes by one penny on working families; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty pledged in writing to obey the taxpayer protection law, which requires a referendum before increasing taxes;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To ensure that all of the McGuinty government's tax increases are put before the people of Ontario in a referendum."

I support this petition and affix my signature to it.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): I would ask the members, as they leave, to leave quietly so I can hear the petition being read.

OPTOMETRISTS

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I have a petition to the Ontario Legislature.

"Whereas the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario will be considering a private member's bill that aims to amend the Optometry Act to give optometrists the authority to prescribe therapeutic pharmaceutical agents for the treatment of certain eye diseases; and

"Whereas optometrists are highly trained and equipped with the knowledge and specialized instrumentation needed to effectively diagnose and treat certain eye problems; and

"Whereas extending the authority to prescribe TPAs to optometrists will help relieve the demands on ophthalmologists and physicians who currently have the exclusive domain for prescribing TPAs to optometry patients; and

"Whereas the bill introduced by New Democrat Peter Kormos ... will ensure that patients receive prompt, timely, one-stop care where appropriate;

"Therefore, I do support the bill proposing an amendment to the Optometry Act to give optometrists the authority to prescribe therapeutic pharmaceutical agents for the treatment of certain eye diseases and I urge the government of Ontario to ensure speedy passage of the bill."

Signed by hundreds and by myself as well.

1500

ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL PARKWAY

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Alexander Graham Bell, renowned inventor of society-altering technological inventions, such as the telephone, greatly revolutionized the daily lives of people in Ontario, Canada and indeed the world; and

"Whereas Alexander Graham Bell's contributions to science, technology and society as a whole, were in part developed and tested while he lived in Brantford, Ontario; and

"Whereas Brantford lies at the heart of the section of Highway 403 which runs from Woodstock to Burlington;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To adopt and pass into law Dave Levac's private member's bill, Bill 44, the Alexander Graham Bell Parkway Act, renaming Highway 403 between Woodstock and Burlington as a tribute to this great inventor" and resident of Brantford.

I sign my name to this petition and give it over to Kathryn.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas recreational trailers kept at parks and campgrounds in Ontario are being assessed by the Municipal Property Assessment Corp (MPAC) and are subject to property taxes; and

"Whereas owners of these trailers are seasonal and occasional residents who contribute to the local" tourist "economy ... without requiring significant municipal services; and

"Whereas the added burden of this taxation will make it impossible for many families of modest income to afford their holiday sites at parks and campgrounds" in Ontario;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That these seasonal trailers not be subject to retroactive taxation for the year 2003; and that the tax not be imposed in 2004; and that no such tax be introduced without consultation with owners of the trailers and trailer parks, municipal governments, businesses, the tourism sector and other stakeholders."

I am pleased to endorse and sign this on their behalf.

HEALTH CARE SERVICES

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have petitions that have been sent to me by M^{me} Louise Marois of St Charles, Ontario. They read as follows:

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberal government is cutting provincial funding for essential health care services like optometry, physiotherapy and chiropractic care;

"Whereas the privatization of health care services will force Ontarians to pay out-of-pocket for essential health care;

"Whereas Ontarians already pay for health care through their taxes and will be forced to pay even more through the government's new regressive health tax;

"Whereas the Liberals promised during the election that they would not cut or privatize health care services in Ontario;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We demand the McGuinty Liberal government keep its promises and guarantee adequate provincial funding for critical health services like eye, physiotherapy and chiropractic care."

I agree with the petitioners; I've affixed my signature to this.

SEWAGE TREATMENT PLANT

Mrs Maria Van Bommel (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex):

I have a petition on behalf of the constituents of Kingston and the Islands.

"Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Amherstview water pollution control plant in Loyalist township discharges effluent into the Bayview bog, which drains into Glenvale Creek, Westbrook Creek and Collins Creek into Lake Ontario;" and

"Whereas the sewage effluent nutrient, metal and sulphur oxide contaminants have adversely affected water quality, sediment quality and biota diversity in the watercourse;" and

"Whereas the sewage effluent volume and constant flow has flooded farmland, destroyed hardwood forests and terrestrial habitat, and magnified the impact of seasonal floods on the downstream residences;" and

"Whereas the sewage effluent pathogenic and organic contamination poses unacceptable human health risk to recreational activity and potable water supplies along the watercourse;" and

"Whereas Loyalist township has the option of discharging the effluent directly into Lake Ontario, as cited in the consultant's June 2004 environmental study report;

"We, the undersigned citizens of west Kingston residing along the watercourse, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to consider the deleterious impacts of the current and proposed increased effluent discharges on the downstream landowners and residents, hitherto excluded from the recent municipal class environmental assessment."

HEALTH CARE

Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Liberal government has announced in their budget that they are delisting key health services such as routine eye exams, chiropractic and physiotherapy services,

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To reverse the delisting of eye exams, chiropractic and physiotherapy services and restore funding for these important and necessary services."

I'm pleased to sign this petition.

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need;

"Those with reduced ability to pay, including seniors, low-income families and the working poor, will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments;

"The elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

"There was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province."

LANDFILL

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the county of Simcoe proposes to construct a landfill at site 41 in the township of Tiny; and

"Whereas the county of Simcoe has received, over a period of time, the necessary approvals from the Ministry of the Environment to design and construct a landfill at site 41; and

"Whereas, as part of the landfill planning process, peer reviews of site 41 identified over 200 recommendations for improvements to the design, most of which are related to potential groundwater contamination; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has on numerous occasions stated her passion for clean and safe water and the need for water source protection; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has indicated her intention to introduce legislation on water source protection, which is a final and key recommendation to be implemented under Justice Dennis O'Connor's report on the Walkerton inquiry; and

"Whereas the Minister of the Environment has announced expert panels that will make recommendations to the minister on water source protection legislation; and

"Whereas the Ministry of the Environment will now be responsible for policing nutrient management; and

"Whereas the citizens of Ontario will be expecting a standing committee of the Legislature to hold province-wide public hearings on water source protection legislation;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the government of Ontario and the Ministry of the Environment to immediately place a moratorium on the development of site 41 until the water source protection legislation is implemented in Ontario. We believe the legislation will definitely affect the design of site 41 and the nearby water sources."

I'm pleased to sign that.

TUITION

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a petition that's been sent to me by the students' general association of the Canadian Federation of Students, Local 30, which is at Laurentian University. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the Ontario Liberal government took an historic step forward by funding a tuition freeze for two years; and

"Whereas the majority of Ontarians support increased public funding for colleges and universities, as well as reduced tuition fees; and

"Whereas increasing student debt through income-contingent loan repayment schemes or raising loan limits only increases the cost of post-secondary education for students from modest means; and

"Whereas per student investment in Ontario still lags gravely behind the vast majority of jurisdictions in North America;

"Therefore we the undersigned, supporting the Canadian Federation of Students' call to increase funding for colleges and universities and reduce tuition fees for all Ontario students, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to (a) reduce tuition fees for all students in Ontario, (b) increase public funding for post-secondary education to at least the national average, and (c) implement an upfront, needs-based grant system for Ontario full-time and part-time students."

I agree with the petitioners and I add my signature to this.

IMMIGRANTS' SKILLS

Mr Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly from a group of homeowners in the Lisgar area of Mississauga, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas Ontario enjoys the continuing benefit of the contributions of men and women who choose to leave their country of origin in order to settle in Canada, raise their families, educate their children and pursue their livelihoods and careers; and

"Whereas newcomers to Canada who choose to settle in Ontario find frequent and unnecessary obstacles that prevent skilled tradespeople, professional and managerial talent from practising the professions, trades and occupations for which they have been trained in their country of origin; and

"Whereas Ontario, its businesses, its people and its institutions badly need the professional, managerial and technical skills that many newcomers to Canada have and want to use;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario, through the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities and the other institutions and agencies of and within the government of Ontario, undertake specific and proactive measures to work with the bodies regulating access to Ontario's

professions, trades and other occupations in order that newcomers to Canada gain fair, timely and cost-effective access to certification and other measures that facilitate the entry or re-entry of skilled workers and professionals trained outside Canada into the Canadian workforce."

I am one of those residents of Lisgar. I absolutely agree with this, and I'm affixing my signature.

1510

LESLIE M. FROST CENTRE

Ms Laurie Scott (Haliburton-Victoria-Brock): A petition to save the Frost Centre:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Leslie M. Frost Natural Resources Centre has a long history in the county of Haliburton and provides an important historical link dating back to its use in 1921 as a chief ranger station; and

"Whereas the history in the use and management of natural resources in Ontario stretches back to the 1600s and forms an integral part of the overall history of the province and Ministry of Natural Resources, and the history of the ministry and the Frost Centre itself easily qualifies as a significant historic resource; and

"Whereas the Minister of Culture, Madeleine Meilleur, has said, 'The McGuinty government values and is committed to conserving Ontario's heritage for the enjoyment and benefit of present and future generations'; and

"Whereas the Frost Centre is an important educational resource for the community, being described on the Ministry of Natural Resources Web site as 'Ontario's leading natural resources education, training and conference centre'; and

"Whereas closure of the Frost Centre would cause economic hardship in the local communities of the county of Haliburton and district of Muskoka due to direct job losses and loss of tourism dollars spent in local communities; and

"Whereas the local community has not been consulted about the closure plan;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"The Dalton McGuinty Liberals should not close the Leslie M. Frost Centre."

SENIOR CITIZENS

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): The member from Brant.

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): Speaker, I would defer to the other member, if you wish. Too late? OK.

This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas elderly citizens living in retirement homes have no provincial legislation to protect them. Retirement homes are uninspected, unmonitored and unregulated. The quality of care varies widely. We are asking for provincial legislation to implement regular inspections,

with the authority to impose violations, charges and penalties, and to establish and ensure set standards for retirement homes that must be met and adhered to.”

I sign my name to this petition and support it wholeheartedly.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Having missed a round, the member from Nickel Belt.

EYE EXAMINATIONS

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads as follows:

“Whereas the 2004 provincial budget was not clear on whether adult optometry patients who ... are at risk for medical conditions such as diabetes, glaucoma, macular degeneration and clinically significant cataracts would continue to be covered through the Ontario health insurance plan; and

“Whereas Ontario’s optometrists strongly feel that Ontario seniors, those under 20 and those with chronic sight-threatening diseases must continue to receive primary eye care services directly from Ontario’s optometrists; and

“Whereas forcing patients to be referred to optometrists through their family physicians ignores the years of specialized training optometrists undertake to detect, diagnose and treat eye conditions; and

“Whereas almost 140 communities across the province have already been designated as underserved for family practitioners and the government’s approach will only exacerbate the problem unnecessarily;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care immediately clarify that the eye examination services they provide to patients at risk for medical conditions will continue to be covered by OHIP and the coverage for these services is not dependent on a patient being referred to an optometrist by a family physician.”

I agree with the petitioners. I have signed my signature to this.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

LIQUOR LICENCE AMENDMENT ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES PERMIS D’ALCOOL

Mr Watson moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 96, An Act to amend the Liquor Licence Act /
Projet de loi 96, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les permis
d’alcool.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Mr Watson.

Hon Jim Watson (Minister of Consumer and Business Services): Mr Speaker, I’ll be sharing my time with my new parliamentary assistant, the member for Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot.

The purpose of this legislation is to—

The Speaker: Thank you very much. Mr Watson has moved second reading of Bill 96. Is it the pleasure of the House—sorry, I’m actually way ahead now. Mr Watson?

Hon Mr Watson: Thank you, Mr Speaker. The purpose of this legislation is to balance consumer choice in liquor service with stronger enforcement measures to increase public safety.

Ontario’s Liquor Licence Act was originally enacted in 1944. It sets out rules for the sale and service of beverage alcohol in the province of Ontario, and the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario is responsible for the administration of the act.

Over the years, amendments have been made to the legislation to improve economic opportunities for the hospitality sector while strengthening social responsibility requirements. The last significant reform to the statute took place, actually, when the current finance minister held my portfolio in 1990. Since then, the act has become increasingly outdated and out of step with the evolving and maturing hospitality marketplace.

By modernizing the Liquor Licence Act, we’re taking the first step toward bringing Ontario’s liquor laws into the 21st century. The process of modernization obviously can’t be accomplished overnight, and our government is committed to future stages of Liquor Licence Act reform in consultation with stakeholders and the public. However, the bill before us, Bill 96, represents the first stage of that reform. It’s the first step in our overall strategy to modernize the Liquor Licence Act by increasing consumer choice, strengthening enforcement tools, and reducing administrative burden.

Let me remind you again about the two components of the bill.

The first component would lay the groundwork for Bring Your Own Wine, also known as BYOW.

Le projet de loi propose une définition du terme « approvisionnement » afin d’indiquer clairement que le terme ne désigne pas uniquement les cas où un client achète de l’alcool chez un titulaire de licence. Si le projet de loi est adopté, le terme « approvisionnement » englobera également les cas où un client apporte du vin dans des débits de boissons.

While the change itself appears relatively minor, if passed by this Legislature it will lay the important social responsibility groundwork for future changes. If passed, this bill will maintain current social responsibility requirements if Bring Your Own Wine comes into effect. There will be no questions or ambiguity about responsibility. Licensees would still be responsible, as they are today, for making certain that liquor is not supplied to an intoxicated person or to someone under the age of 19, whether that person purchased the wine from the licensee or brought the wine into the restaurant with them.

If this bill is passed, the government will then proceed with regulatory changes to introduce Bring Your Own

Wine to Ontario. The Bring Your Own Wine idea really is about choice—a new consumer choice in liquor service, and a choice for licensed establishments on whether or not to offer this service. The BYOW service would allow patrons to bring bottled wine into licensed restaurants and consume it there. Participation by licensed restaurants would be entirely voluntary. This is very much a piece of legislation that one would consider libertarian, because no businesses would be forced to offer this option. Participating restaurants would simply apply to the AGCO for a special endorsement to their liquor sales licence. Only commercially made and unopened wine would be allowed. Homemade wine and previously opened bottles would not be permitted.

While the quality of homemade wine continues to improve across Ontario, BYOW will be limited to commercial wine, as labels of store-bought wine must clearly state the alcohol content. This measure, requested by the Ontario Community Council on Impaired Driving, OCCID, will assist licensees in their social responsibility duties. I want to thank OCCID for their very constructive and valuable input.

The restaurant would also have the option to establish and charge a corkage fee or service charge.

In other words, if a restaurant does not want to offer this service to its patrons, it doesn't have to, but we shouldn't prohibit a restaurant that wants to offer it by a competitor, saying, "I'm sorry. I don't want you to offer this service." This is all about consumer choice, and it's about the rights of businesses to choose their own type of service in their own establishment.

It's pretty evident when you look at the research on this issue that we're not in uncharted waters. The Bring Your Own Wine option has been successfully offered in other areas of Canada as well as in parts of the United States and around the world. In fact, I believe there are over 30 different jurisdictions—Australia, New Zealand, Massachusetts, New York, Quebec, Alberta, New Brunswick, France, Italy, a number of jurisdictions—that clearly feel this is a service that consumers appreciate.

1520

The owner of Infusion Bistro in Ottawa was quoted in a recent newspaper article as saying, "Anything that's going to enhance the consumer's perception or experience at a restaurant is good." I also agree with the restaurateur quoted in another newspaper recently who said, "What's good for the patron is good for the restaurant."

Correspondence to my office is about 75% in favour of this initiative, and I appreciate the feedback I've received from so many forward-thinking licensees who see BYOW as a great new opportunity and not a threat to their business, people like a restaurateur I recently met with in Windsor who wants to strike a deal with wineries in the Pelee Island region to encourage tourists and visitors alike to purchase a bottle of wine and bring it to her restaurant.

Another Toronto restaurateur wants to offer BYOW to his customers on their slow night, Mondays. They do this

quite often in New York. On a Monday night, which is traditionally a slow night in the restaurant industry, they would offer BYOW just on that particular night, which is completely permissible under the legislation.

Many of us remember Rod Seiling, a great player with the Toronto Maple Leafs and a member of the 1972—

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): The New York Rangers.

Hon Mr Watson: He was with the Leafs. Rod is now president of the Greater Toronto Hotel Association, and he said, "These changes are progressive and will enable the industry to better serve its diverse customer base."

Stephen Beckta, one of the restaurateurs who is listed, I believe, in *enRoute* magazine as one of the top restaurants in Canada, said, "I'm all for allowing customers the option to bring their own wine into our restaurant for a corkage fee. This practice allows people to dine out more often and with greater flexibility. Having worked as a sommelier and restaurant manager in New York, I know first-hand that this can be beneficial to guests and restaurants alike. That's why I'm a firm supporter of this initiative." That's a fine restaurant in Mr Patten's riding that I'm sure he's familiar with.

If the bill is passed, the government has also announced our plans to introduce another consumer choice to Ontario, the option, Take Home the Rest. The initiative would allow patrons to remove an unfinished bottle of wine from licensed establishments, as long as the licensee had properly resealed the bottle. Again, participation by licensed establishments would be entirely voluntary, another aspect that people should keep in mind.

British Columbia, by the way, introduced this option in 2002. Take Home the Rest has gone very smoothly. Likewise, in Alberta they introduced it last year.

For participating restaurants, Take Home the Rest would apply to bottles consumers brought with them or to ones they ordered from the restaurant itself. If customers were able to take home what they didn't drink, they might be more inclined to dine out in the first place, increasing restaurant revenue, but more importantly they wouldn't feel compelled to finish the whole bottle on-site, encouraging responsible drinking, obviously.

The social responsibility benefits of Take Home the Rest have also been highlighted by the Ontario Community Council on Impaired Driving.

I had the honour for several years of being the president and CEO of the Canadian Tourism Commission. I saw first-hand, particularly post 9/11, the challenges that face the hospitality industry. Of course the challenges have compounded in recent years with the SARS outbreak, the rising dollar, heightened security concerns and other issues. I know our great Minister of Tourism, Mr Bradley, is working hard to encourage tourists to come back to great parts of this province, whether it's northern Ontario, the Niagara region, eastern Ontario or right here in Toronto. I remain firmly convinced that if you want to build your business, you

simply can't go wrong by offering consumers more choices.

But liquor reform is more than about giving consumers and businesses more choices. It's also about social responsibility and public safety. That's why we're balancing increased consumer choice with stronger enforcement measures. We're proposing changes to give regulators and law enforcement officials new tools to protect our communities. One amendment would allow the registrar of the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario to immediately suspend a liquor license, if necessary, in the public interest; that is, where there is a threat to public safety.

Currently under the act, two board members can order an interim suspension of a liquor licence, if necessary, in the public interest. This procedure takes time as two board members must be found to deal with the matter. Meanwhile, dangerous or disruptive situations can continue. This government is concerned about liquor-related violence. If passed, this amendment to the Liquor Licence Act would enable the alcohol and gaming commission to take quick action to address these urgent problems as they occur.

An immediate interim suspension of a liquor licence by the registrar would be followed within 15 days by a full hearing by the board to review the suspension.

Currently, the Registrar of Alcohol and Gaming has the power to immediately suspend a registration under the Gaming Control Act, but not under the Liquor Licence Act. The reform we're proposing would provide comparable powers regarding liquor licences and would quickly address public concerns. This change would be an important step toward equipping the alcohol and gaming commission with modern tools to enforce the liquor laws effectively and take quick action to protect the public.

Here's another problem we intend to fix: Under the current Liquor Licence Act, police can order people—and this is something I had no knowledge of until it was brought to my attention—to vacate licensed premises where the act or regulations have been contravened or public safety is threatened; however, it is not an offence, ironically, to either fail to leave the premise or to come right back. We want to close this loophole by making it an offence to fail to leave a licensed premise if ordered to do so by a police officer, or to return the same day after being asked to leave. Police could lay charges against people who thwart their efforts to clear premises in disruptive situations. The Toronto Police Service, for instance, recommended this change as far back as 1997, and action is long overdue. We all know the circumstances. Often people are asked to leave a licensed establishment for inappropriate or rowdy behaviour, and when they come back they are not in the kind of shape or frame of mind where they should be involved in coming back to the licensed establishment.

Finally, the issue of underage drinking remains a serious concern. We propose to double the minimum fines for offences relating to liquor and underage persons.

Nous prévoyons doubler les amendes minimales, c'est-à-dire qu'elles passeront de 100 \$ à 200 \$ pour une personne qui n'a pas de licence et de 500 \$ à 1000 \$ pour un titulaire de licence. Nous montrons ainsi que nous ne plaisantons pas en matière de consommation d'alcool chez le mineurs.

Notre gouvernement croit que la modernisation du système de licence pour débit de boisson doit établir un juste milieu. D'une part, il doit améliorer le choix offert au consommateur et le service à la clientèle, et, d'autre part, il doit fournir des instruments d'application plus puissants et plus efficaces.

One of the issues we'll be looking at is the streamlining of the liquor licence application process. The current application system assumes one size fits all. The Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario evaluates all applications through the same process, regardless of the applicant's size or track record. For example, a family restaurant and a megabar go through an identical process, which doesn't seem to make much sense. We're interested in changing this by evaluating applications on the basis of their risk to public safety.

There are a number of other items that we'll be looking into in the future to continue to bring our liquor laws into the 21st century, but that's down the road. I was in Peterborough this morning, and I talked to a number of licensees. They're very excited about the opportunity to have participation in a series of round tables that my parliamentary assistant and I will be leading sometime early in the new year.

The proposed Liquor Licence Amendment Act, 2004, is the foundation we'll build on; it's our first step. We propose to give consumers and licensed restaurants new options in liquor service while maintaining social responsibility in the service and consumption of alcohol. We understand that today's hospitality marketplace is based on choice, and we also understand that strong enforcement of liquor laws means safer communities. That's why we're balancing an increase in consumer choice with tougher enforcement tools. We want to give businesses new opportunities to serve their customers and to make our quality of life that much better in the province of Ontario, and we want to protect the public from the harm that misuse of alcohol and liquor can cause.

We're confident that the outcome of these measures will be real, positive change, change that will make our economy stronger through the hospitality industry, the public safer, and our communities more dynamic and more prosperous.

I'd like to thank all of those who have voiced their support on this piece of legislation. I know my predecessor, the member for Erie-Lincoln, was quoted just after I introduced the legislation, saying, "I am in favour of bring-your-own," as it will be good for tourism. He understands the economic benefits, as a result of being a former tourism minister, and he certainly understands the importance of the wine industry in his backyard.

The legislation before the House would help make all of this possible. I urge all members to lend their support,

and I look forward to a standing committee of this Legislature hearing from the public on these proposed changes.

Thank you, and I pass it to my parliamentary assistant.

1530

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): The Chair recognizes the member from Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot.

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): I'm honoured to rise in support of this proposed legislation. I really appreciate the minister's comments and his great leadership on this file.

Since this issue was first broached a few months ago, a lively debate has ensued in the media, among the public, and now, certainly, in this House, where it's quite proper. That's good. It speaks eloquently to the issue of people starting to pay attention to the need to modernize the Liquor Licence Act and to bring Ontario's laws into the 21st century. That's exactly what we're doing.

That said, whenever a new issue appears on the scene, a certain amount of misinformation can easily slip into the debate. Predictably, this has happened with proposed liquor law reform. Even in this House, I've heard some surprising statements. Minister Watson has done an excellent job of providing useful information about this bill and what it includes. He has explained how it will build the framework for future changes and how it will, indeed, benefit our communities.

The bill is the first step in an overall strategy to modernize the Liquor Licence Act. It's only the beginning of what we want to do. If you were a theologian, you'd say it's a bit like baptism. It's not the end of a journey, it's the start of a journey. That said, there are still lots of myths about where we'd like to go with this strategy, should this bill be passed. I want to take the next few minutes to dispel a series of myths that have cropped up, and, as usual, I intend to do that with facts.

These myths fall into two broad categories: first, how these initiatives would affect the restaurant consumer; and second, how they would impact on the hospitality business itself. One myth is that these changes would loosen the controls that prevent excess drinking. That's not true. As my colleagues have said time and time again, the fact is that responsible liquor service remains a top priority for this government. In this regard, the dining environment would not change. The licensee, in fact, would continue to be accountable for complying with the liquor laws. Even if patrons bring their own wine, it would be up to the licensee to ensure that over-consumption or consumption by minors does not happen. With take-home-the-rest, existing controls on transporting open liquor and the ban on consuming it in public areas would remain in force; in fact, they would be strengthened.

Specific features of the bring-your-own-wine initiative would support responsible conduct. Each bottle must be opened by the licensee or by a server, who would keep track of how much was being consumed, and only un-

opened, commercially made wine would qualify. The minister has outlined some of the reasons for that.

Mr Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe): A very responsible act.

Mr McMeekin: Indeed, as my colleague says, it is a very responsible proposal.

Establishments offering the take-home-the-rest option would be required to reseal the bottle in such a way that it could not be readily reopened and consumed while in transit. And taking your wine home will mean less consumption, not more, as people would not feel compelled to finish the bottle at the table. Frankly, it's an issue of trust. On balance, I trust that most of my constituents want to drink responsibly, not irresponsibly. This will provide choice options for them which I think are prudent and timely.

A related myth is that people would be able to bring in as many bottles of wine as they want and not have to order anything from the restaurant. That's not so. It's just not going happen. In fact, we're confident that licensed restaurants, based on their experience, would be entirely capable of managing these details themselves. We think that's the way it should be.

Licensed restaurants would have the ability to determine the number of bottles the patron could bring on to the premises on any one occasion. Establishments could choose to set such a limit—and, I suspect, most will. Restaurants would also have the option of setting a minimum food order if they wish. I think that's reasonable; you're in the business.

The point I want to stress is this: Licensed restaurants would remain responsible for keeping people from consuming too much liquor.

Hon Mr Watson: As they should.

Mr McMeekin: That's right. As the minister points out, they'd remain accountable and responsible, as they do today, and they're very good at their job.

I've even heard it said that some might show up at any bar or restaurant with a bottle of wine, even fast-food restaurants. Let's get serious. Someone showing up at McDonald's with a bottle of wine under their arm just isn't going to happen. In simple fact, Bring Your Own Wine would apply only to licensed restaurants, those that have obtained a special endorsement to their liquor licence from the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario.

Participation in the bring-your-own-wine initiative will be entirely voluntary—the minister mentioned that; I'm repeating you, Minister; sorry for that—on the part of the restaurant. As I understand from my research, in Alberta, which introduced Bring Your Own Wine last fall, about 6% of the eligible restaurants opted in, and their experience has been a very positive one. While this rate could translate into hundreds of participating restaurants in Ontario, it's also obvious that many restaurants will not be offering this service, and we certainly would not force them to do so. That's not the government's intent.

Yet another myth is that allowing customers to have open wine bottles in the car would just encourage more

people to drink and drive. The fact is, establishments offering the take-home-the-rest option would be required to reseal the bottle in such a way that it could not be readily reopened and consumed while in transit. I think that's another good thing, isn't it.

Mr Ramal: They'd have to be pressured to drink all the bottle.

Mr McMeekin: They would; that's right. We don't want to do that, as my colleague points out. We don't want to pressure anybody to consume more alcohol than they're comfortable with.

Some say that resealing the bottle won't stop patrons from drinking on the street or behind the wheel. The fact is, existing controls on transporting open liquor and the ban on consumption in public areas would still apply. For example, it's the law that open bottles of liquor must not be readily accessible to people in a vehicle, so a take-home-the-rest bottle would likely have to be carried in the trunk, certainly legally out of the reach of any driver. It would be the same as if you were bringing an open bottle home from a party at a friend's house. You would have to transport it in a way that makes it hard to get at. That just makes sense.

There are also some who say that the consumer won't really benefit because the corkage fee would far surpass the cost of the bottle of wine. Again, this is a matter of choice. The fact is, whether to have a corkage fee or not is a question for the individual restaurant operator to decide. It would be a business decision. The government isn't interested in controlling either the minimum or maximum charge, or telling the restaurateur how to make his meat loaf. Over time, the marketplace would determine the level for these fees. Again, "choice" is the operative word.

Now let's turn to some myths about the effect of these initiatives on the restaurant business. One myth is that Ontario is jumping the gun. Some people seem to think, in spite of the evidence, some of which the minister outlined, that Quebec is the only place where these services are available. The fact is, Ontario's playing catch-up, not leading the pack. Bring Your Own Wine is available in New Brunswick, Alberta and Quebec in this country, as well as Australia, several US states and many places around the world. Take Home the Rest is offered in British Columbia, Alberta and Quebec, with very positive feedback.

1540

Then you hear a claim, by some, that these changes will be another regulatory burden on restaurants. That's simply not true. The fact is, these initiatives will enable licensed restaurants to do more, rather than making them do less. Of course, there will be rules surrounding these new services, but I don't think most licensed restaurants will find it an undue burden to comply with requirements such as getting a special endorsement of a liquor licence or ensuring that servers open any bottles that patrons bring with them and reseal them when they leave, or any training that's involved in that whole process. Any licensed restaurant that finds the rules burdensome could

simply choose not to get involved with these initiatives. Participation will be entirely voluntary.

Mr Patten: Who could be opposed to that?

Mr McMeekin: As my colleague from Ottawa points out, who could be opposed to that? It just makes so much sense.

Of course, with Bring your Own Wine and Take Home the Rest, the current rules for the responsible sale and service of alcohol would continue to apply. But those are existing requirements, not new ones.

Another myth is that if patrons brought their own wine, licensed restaurants won't be able to monitor how much they've had to drink. The fact is, restaurants would continue, as they have always done, to be responsible for ensuring that overconsumption, and consumption by minors, does not occur.

Interjection.

Mr McMeekin: I know the member from Ottawa agrees with that.

Licensees would continue to be accountable for responsible liquor service, just as they are now.

Then there are some who say that we're solving the wrong problem; the real need is not more choice but better enforcement of existing laws. The fact is, our package, the package that the esteemed Minister of Consumer and Business Services outlined, does both: It balances new choices for consumers and licensed restaurants with stronger enforcement measures.

We're proposing, for example, to allow the Registrar of Alcohol and Gaming to immediately suspend a liquor licence, if necessary, in the public interest—not have to wait for the next board meeting to do that—as in situations where there is a threat to public safety. We want to do away with delays that may allow dangerous or disruptive situations to affect community and public safety. We'll make it an offence to fail to leave licensed premises when required by a police officer or to return the same day after being asked to leave. We want to do what we can to facilitate the police when they are trying to clear a premise.

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): Then you should consult with them.

Mr McMeekin: We have, at some considerable depth.

Finally, we'll double the minimum fines for offences relating to liquor and underage persons to show we mean business when it comes to underage drinking.

We fully recognize that stronger enforcement means safer communities. We intend to give police and the alcohol and gaming commission more up-to-date tools to protect the public.

To those who say that this package doesn't go far enough and there's more to be done, we agree. The process of modernizing the regulatory system for beverage alcohol can't be completed overnight. The bill before us today represents but the first stage of reform. Our government is committed to further stages of Liquor Licence Act reform, in consultation with stakeholders and the public.

The package before us today is but the foundation upon which we must build. If enacted, it will open up

new opportunities for the hospitality industry to serve consumers and it will give consumers new choices. In the process, it will make our communities safer.

I urge all members to support this bill and join in our effort to bring Ontario's liquor laws into the 21st century.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): The member opposite raised a very important issue. He made mention of drinking and driving in his explanation of what he refers to as myths with respect to, in their view, making alcohol more accessible. This does make alcohol more accessible and hence there is a safety concern with respect to bartenders and other servers being able to monitor what's going on with people bringing booze into their restaurants. I wish to make it very clear to the government that with respect to alcohol and drinking and driving, it doesn't matter whether it's a beer or a shot of rye or rum or gin or scotch or a glass of wine, it's all alcohol.

I've just received a letter written by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health. Their Addiction Research Foundation predecessor did an awful lot of work on drinking and driving. They responded in a letter to the editor of the *Globe and Mail*: "CAMH is concerned that public health and safety considerations have been largely absent from the discussions about the possibility of patrons bringing their own wine to restaurants."

Mothers Against Drunk Driving—I think we'll hear a bit from this organization during this debate—sent out a news release titled "Real Concern for Increase in Impaired Driving." They did a survey. "Almost half of the public has concerns for drinking and driving and an increase in impaired driving incidents, according to a recent SES opinion poll commissioned by MADD Canada," with respect to this BYOW legislation. As MADD has indicated, and I concur, "The Ontario public is not screaming for BYOW and there isn't the overwhelming support of 9-1 that Minister Watson suggested at the launch of the bill."

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): New Democrats are going to be speaking to the measure. It's remarkable. Here we are after how many weeks, months of break and this is the government's top priority: Bring a jug of wine to Harvey's or to the Kentucky Fried Chicken diner with you. It is remarkable that this government—when seniors are getting whacked left and right; when their drug benefit plan is now under attack by this government; when this government is hell-bent on and has privatized increasing areas of health care like chiropractic, like optometry, like physiotherapy; when this government dismisses persons with disabilities with a mere 3% increase in their income after—what?—eight, nine years of zip, zero; when this government downloads yet more and more on to hard, cash-strapped communities, this is what we get after weeks and weeks of summer break: Bring your own wine to Al's Diner. Give me a break. It's the silliest darned thing you ever saw.

What it does is illustrate the disdain that this government has, that the Liberals have, for the people who are

hurting out there, the disdain this government has for the people whose auto insurance premiums are skyrocketing, never mind two consecutive promises of 10% reduction each. Not a penny in reduction, more increases for the vast majority of all car drivers, car owners, here in Ontario. This government gives a paltry few cents an hour increase to minimum wage workers who are already finding themselves living in poverty, notwithstanding they're working 40- and 50-hour weeks. And this is the best they can do: Bring your own wine when you drop in at Al's Diner for your roast beef sandwich and fries with gravy, corn or peas on the side?

I think Ontarians are particularly disappointed. This is the sort of frustration they've been experiencing now for a year plus a few days, a government that's broken every promise it ever made. Promises the moon when it's running for election; delivers zip once it's elected.

Mr Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): Those in Ontario who enjoy a bottle of wine are quietly optimistic that the era of neoprohibition in alcohol-related laws in Ontario is finally relaxing its regressive grip. The Minister of Consumer and Business Services has brought forth a proposal of such breathtaking good sense that one wonders why debate is even necessary.

1550

My friend Clinton, who's a connoisseur and a collector of fine wines, often patronizes restaurants whose wine lists are nowhere near as extensive as his own cellar. Clinton and his wife can, if this bill is passed, look forward to having dinner together, even in a modestly priced restaurant, and augment their choice of entrée with a vintage wine from Clinton's cellar, if the mood suits them and if the restaurant participates.

I have an acquaintance who owns a fine restaurant. He's all in favour of this proposal. As he sees it, a party of several people can choose a few bottles of wine and bring them along, if they choose. For a standard per bottle corkage fee, his staff will uncork, serve and remove the bottles. As he sees it, if he wants to participate in the bring-your-own-wine program, he can. If he feels uncomfortable with it, or even if he tries it and changes his mind, he can opt out.

Bill 96 offers Ontario wine producers another market channel. That's good for Ontario agriculture, that's good for consumers and that's also good enough for the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, one of the many groups consulted by the ministry.

The bill closes some obvious loopholes in the Liquor Licence Act, and says to responsible people that they can expect to be treated as adults in a restaurant, just as they would be treated as adults if they brought the same bottle of wine to a friend's home for a private dinner.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): Mr Speaker, I'm going to join my colleague from Niagara Centre. I am shocked that this is the best the Liberal Party can do in its first week back. You'd think that after listening to constituents, they would be bringing the case, their plight of the priority issues for them, to this, the people's chamber.

During our break, I had the opportunity to visit the May Court hospice and learn about the tremendously important work they do for people who are gravely ill and in the final stages of their life. The morning that I visited the May Court hospice, two people had passed on.. This government has cut the funding for the May Court. This government has cut the funding to the May Court, and then they had to come in, due to public embarrassment, and give them some makeshift funding until the end of the fiscal year while they sort out the mess they caused.

The most astonishing thing about it, what this Liberal government has done with the May Court is that they've pushed them in front of a bus and then grabbed them at the last minute to try and rescue them, and ask to get some credit for the bailout. That's the kind of bill they should be debating in this House. That should be the priority for the people of Ontario, dealing with real concerns that matter to people, like our failing health care system and the May Court hospice.

We're going to be debating palliative care tomorrow during private members' hour. I wonder if the member presenting that motion knows about the May Court Hospice and the looming cuts put on by the Minister of Health, George Smitherman. I say to the Minister of Health—Jason or Ken, if you're watching—think about the May Court Hospice and do the right thing: Restore stable funding so that they can continue to do the best thing for people in my community.

The Deputy Speaker: The Minister of Consumer and Business Services.

Hon Mr Watson: I want to thank the honourable members from Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant, Niagara Centre, Mississauga West and the junior member from Nepean. The gentleman from Nepean is a born-again health advocate, because all of a sudden he's found religion. He's found the May Court convalescent home, of which he never darkened the doorstep before a couple of weeks ago. I was very proud of the McGuinty government providing bridge funding to the May Court hospice to make sure that we clean up the mess from the previous government.

I also want to thank the members for their support of Bill 96, because that's what we're here to talk about. The honourable member from Simcoe says we haven't consulted the police. In fact, I had a very good conversation with the president of the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police. I've talked to the deputy chief of Toronto and the deputy chief of Ottawa. We've consulted AMO, the Greater Toronto Hotel Association, the Canadian Restaurant and Foodservices Association, the Ontario Restaurant Hotel and Motel Association, the cities of Ottawa, Windsor, Kingston and Toronto, the Ottawa Gatineau Hotel Association, numerous restaurants, the legal community, the wine council, OCCID and MADD, just to name a few.

The fact of the matter is that this is a piece of legislation that is wholeheartedly supported by the member from Erie—I wish the Conservatives would get their act

together—a great, young, vibrant member who has taken the lead to say this is the right, progressive thing to do. It is not revolutionary; it is evolutionary. This is going to give individual restaurateurs the choice whether they want to offer BYOW. If they don't want to, they don't have to. It gives choice.

The member from Lanark had the vision to allow beer to be served on golf courses; that's going to go on his tombstone, one of the great initiatives by the member from Lanark. This is another initiative that is not revolutionary. It's something that is quite reasonable.

In the hospitality industry, the people I've spoken to, because it is voluntary, think it's a reasonable idea. I urge the Legislature's support.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate.

Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): I will be sharing my time today with the member for Simcoe North and the member for Leeds-Grenville.

I am honoured to deal today with Bill 96, An Act to amend the Liquor Licence Act, which passed first reading on June 10, 2004. The bill consists of about seven sections, and all are enforcement sections, except for section 1, which reads:

"Section 1 of the Liquor Licence Act ... is amended by adding the following definition:

"'supply' includes a licensee's permitting the consumption on licensed premises of wine that a patron has brought onto the premises, in accordance with the regulations, for the patron's consumption, alone or in the company of others...."

The plan is voluntary. Similar programs have already been instituted in Alberta, British Columbia, Quebec and New Brunswick, among our provinces, and in a number of states, as has previously been related.

The government has also announced some changes permitting patrons to take home open but unfinished bottles of wine. They will be introduced, but these provisions are not contained in the present Bill 96.

This legislation raises a number of important issues. The first issue is, of course, the impact on the hospitality industry, an industry that has met with unfortunate results since the SARS concerns were raised in Ontario. It is most important that we have full committee hearings in regard to this bill to determine what the impact will be. Second, it is voluntary inclusion, which is interesting because there's likely to be some confusion on the part of individual consumers, at least to start with, as to which restaurants are part of the program and which are not. Third, the ever-important safety on our roads and drinking and driving has to be explored in committee so that we can determine whether the concerns of groups such as MADD are valid. MADD has indicated there is research that would indicate that cheaper liquor or liquor products would mean greater consumption, and this might translate into adverse safety on our roads. Again, it is something to be explored in committee. Lastly is the liability that will arise from this, whether, in fact, the courts will hold the individual proprietor liable or the individual who brings the wine to the drinking establishment.

What's really interesting, however, in the timing of Bill 96 is the priority of this government. I noted yesterday during question period that the Premier proudly stood in this House—as a matter of fact, he chastised Mr Runciman at some length in regard to the content of a question directed to him, and he said that the main issues are not what Mr Runciman was raising but in fact health and education. Those are the primary matters that our citizens in this province are concerned about. Yet the second bill before this House at this time is a bill dealing with taking your own wine to restaurants. Why has this government put this bill forward at this time?

1600

A cynic might recall that Karl Marx asserted that religion is the opiate of the masses, but in Liberal Ontario it would seem that wine is that opiate. The new motto is, "If you can get them to drink enough, they'll forget your broken promises." And they weren't just election promises.

Recently the government announced a \$100-billion capital spending program. I really took a look at that, because I considered it a hoax, and I use the word advisedly. In reality, it was just the usual annual announcement of a capital allocation of \$3.1 billion. But it was announced as a 30-year plan, and this resulted in a \$100-billion announcement. I still haven't figured out how they arrived at \$100 billion over 30 years. If you take \$3 billion and then multiply by 10, you get \$30 billion. If you multiply it by 20, you get \$60 billion. If you multiply it by 30, you get \$90 billion, and you're up to 30 years, but that's not \$100 billion. As a matter of fact, if you just took inflation at 2% a year and multiplied it by 30 years, you're well over \$100 billion. You're probably closer to \$120 billion, and that is for level spending. I have this picture in my mind that all the communications people in the Premier's office were sitting around one night saying, "How can we take a \$3-billion announcement that nobody is going to print because it's of no importance—it's the usual announcement—and get some press on it?" They said, "Well, we could have a plan for 30 years," knowing full well that they had no power—absolutely none—after their first three years, because even if there is another Liberal government, which is highly unlikely, that Liberal government would not be bound by this plan. So knowing full well that this plan was meaningless, they multiplied by 30 years and came up with \$100 billion, which is an incorrect amount as far as their arithmetic goes.

But they did it, and it worked. That's the great part. It was a very clever move. Bylines across Ontario trumpeted \$100 billion in spending. Unfortunately, those bylines are sometimes all ordinary Ontarians have a chance to read as they're skimming through the paper. The interesting part is that the hoax was bought by the newspapers too. I look at these high-priced political pundits and their acumen, their political will, and yet, they bought it too. So they got suckered. Here we are at \$100 billion, which was made up of whole cloth.

Not all the promises we are tying to cover up by our new wine bill were election promises; some of them were

post-election. We can still talk about the broken promise in regard to chiropractic services, but of course, if you have two or three drinks, maybe you'll forget it. We can still talk about the elimination of eye examinations for the people who are most vulnerable, but take your own bottle. You'll be able to drink more at the restaurant, so maybe you'll forget it, and of course, physiotherapy. I've got so many seniors in my riding. Physiotherapy is keeping them mobile, it's keeping them ambulatory, and all of a sudden, it's being taken away from them. I don't know what they're going to do. They could end up in our already overburdened hospitals, so there is no savings there. I get concerned when, willy-nilly, by a stroke of the pen and by a broken promise, services are reduced.

Our local hospital has been severely impacted by the cuts that this government has introduced into the health care field. Again, we're dealing here with wine and Bill 96 when we should be talking about the health care system. As the Premier has properly pointed out, that is the priority that we have in Ontario.

The government has cut back funding to my Cambridge Memorial Hospital that we've worked so hard to build up. Our hospital was chronically underfunded. My predecessor tried to bring it into par and worked hard at it. I continued working hard to do that, and we did get substantial increases in funding for our hospital. In one year it was over 30%, as a matter of fact, just to bring us, not in the lead in hospitals, but to a state where we had parity with other community hospitals of the same size in Ontario. Then all of a sudden the cutbacks have started by this Liberal government.

What's the result? We're going to lose 27 full-time staff members from our hospital as a result of Liberal government cutbacks. They are going to be lost as of October 29, 2004. This is not something that's going to happen down the road; this is something that is going to impact my rapidly growing city and the township of North Dumfries and the south part of Kitchener that is part of my riding. There's going to be a severe impact as a result of these cutbacks.

We're going to have to cut back 10 alternate-level beds. This is of great concern. I think we're about the fourth-fastest-growing city and maybe the first-fastest-growing area, if you take the whole region of Waterloo, in the province of Ontario—one of the fastest-growing and yet we are cutting beds. I get complaints from individuals who arrive at the hospital and end up in the hallway because no beds are available, and yet this government is cutting 10 of our beds in this hospital. I don't know what the result of that is going to be, except pain and hardship on many of the good citizens of Cambridge. That's not counting the pain and hardship that the staff is going to go through, trying to cope with this situation.

We started, a few years ago—not that long—a cardiac rehabilitation program to ensure that people who have gone through a cardiac procedure are brought back to full standing. That is going to be eliminated as of October 29. Have another drink of wine, because that's what we're supposed to be talking about.

We used to have fitness appraisals. That's now gone on October 29 of this year.

We have health and wellness consultations, which have proved very valuable at our hospital. That's gone as of October 29, 2004.

We had a menopause clinic to assist individuals going through the menopause period, which can be most difficult for some. They will no longer have the benefit of that service and that program.

Gone, as of October 29, 2004, is our nutritional counselling service. It's gone.

Osteoporosis program, October 29, 2004: It has been eliminated.

The physiotherapy clinic, as of October 29, 2004, will no longer be available to the residents of Cambridge, North Dumfries and south Kitchener.

The speech therapy practice group will be eliminated as of October 29, 2004.

Worst of all: the chronic pain clinic, which has proved most valuable to many individuals, will be eliminated as of November 30, 2004.

1610

A rather plaintive letter was in the paper the other day. An individual wrote after the announcement of all these cuts at our hospital:

"I came to attend the pain clinic in September 2004 after being referred in October of 2003. There has been a wait list due to the demand and need for the program. I have been unable to work since September 2003 due to my health condition, of which pain is a major component. Being a single" mother "of two young children, ages three and six, finding a way to cope with and manage my pain has been a key issue to enable me to continue in my role as a parent to my children."

That service and that program will no longer be available to this individual or 110,000 individuals—

The Deputy Speaker: Member from Cambridge, I know you want to try and end with Bill 96, so I'd appreciate that.

Mr Martiniuk: I shall mention Bill 96 soon, Mr Speaker. Thank you again for having the courtesy to point out my failings in that regard.

As the Speaker has pointed out, I have wandered a little off the topic. However, I was dealing with the priorities of this government, and I personally think it's an absolute shame that we have pressing issues in this province in regard to health, in regard to education, in regard to policing, and we are dealing this evening with a bill permitting the use of home brew in—

Hon Mr Watson: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I've listened to the honourable member and I wonder if there's unanimous consent to refer this immediately to committee.

The Deputy Speaker: Are you asking for that?

Hon Mr Watson: Yes.

The Deputy Speaker: The minister has asked for unanimous consent to refer this to committee. Is there unanimous consent? I heard a no.

Continue, member for Cambridge, please.

Mr Martiniuk: Now that the minister has cleverly interrupted me to throw me off the scent—he has done a good job. Between you and the Speaker, I'm speechless.

The Deputy Speaker: I'm not sure you were on it.

Mr Martiniuk: I'm sorry. OK, as I was saying, you've got your priorities wrong. This is not what the people of Ontario want to see. On that basis, I will sit down.

Mr Dunlop: I'm very pleased to follow the member from Cambridge and his comments on Bill 96. I guess I have to start out by echoing some of the things that the member from Cambridge actually mentioned. I'm wondering what the screaming demand is for this particular piece of legislation. We know that the government wants to make some good-news stories and all that sort of thing, and I would think that if I were the minister in this particular case, this would be one of the better stories I'd want to announce, and I'd want to see this legislation debated. And I do appreciate his comments today, and the parliamentary assistant's comments as well.

I have a number of questions around the legislation, and the first thing is, I'm wondering why it wasn't something they campaigned on. I brought along a copy of the Liberal platform from last summer, the plan, and I couldn't find one thing in there about bringing your own wine to dinner. I haven't found one—not one thing—in there. I never heard of a consultation process that wanted that, but on 147 pages of literally hundreds and hundreds of promises to the citizens of the province of Ontario, there's nothing about bringing your own wine. So I guess that's my first concern, that they never campaigned on this, and second, that there's really no demand.

As the critic for corrections and community safety, I have to oppose this piece of legislation. I think our government, when we were in power, and I'm hoping this government, and even going back to the days of the NDP—I was hoping and I was under the impression that we were all in favour of keeping a strict control on drinking and driving and dealing with our stakeholders in that area when it came to any type of legislation.

I can tell you, I went on the Web site today for Mothers Against Drunk Driving and pulled off the information. I'd like to read that into the record because Mothers Against Drunk Driving is an organization that helped me with my private member's bill, the ignition interlock device bill. Both the government and the opposition consulted with them on that particular piece of legislation. I just want you to know that I think they are a stakeholder that the government should listen to very, very carefully. Hopefully, the government will listen to them and Mothers Against Drunk Driving will get an opportunity to speak to the bill in committee.

I'd like to read what Mothers Against Drunk Driving said in their press release:

"Ontarians are divided in their support for the Ontario government's new 'bring your own wine' ... to restaurants law. Almost half of the public has concerns for drinking and driving and an increase in impaired driving incidents, according to a recent SES opinion poll commissioned by MADD Canada.

"On the question of support for BYOW, the Ontario public was split down the middle. Less than half of Ontarians—44%—support the new BYOW initiative. That is only slightly more than the 41% of Ontarians who oppose the initiative.

"When asked about their concern for an impact on people who drink and drive, 43% of Ontarians agreed with MADD Canada that there is a concern for impaired driving—responding that BYOW would 'increase the number of people who drink and drive.'

"There is a real concern for the increase in impaired driving incidents that will accompany this BYOW law,' says Andrew Murie, national executive director for MADD Canada. 'We want the government not to press forward with this isolated policy change and rethink their agenda to implement a full and comprehensive review of the province's liquor laws.'

"The Ontario public is not screaming for BYOW, and there isn't the overwhelming support of 9-1 that Minister Watson suggested at the launch of the bill,' says Mr Murie. 'If anything, these numbers tell us that the government needs to proceed with greater caution on these reforms and they must address the public's concern for drinking and driving.'

"The BYOW legislation shouldn't be a priority for this government,' adds Mr Murie."

I repeat that: It's not important enough and it certainly shouldn't be a priority, particularly at this very early stage of this fall session.

"MADD Canada is against the BYOW proposal because there will be a higher likelihood that more people will drink much more wine than currently is the case. The organization is urging Consumer and Business Services Minister Jim Watson to review the recommended reforms of the province's liquor law task force and bring forward a comprehensive liquor law reform package instead of piecemeal reform initiatives.

"The SES poll questions read: 'As you may know, the Ontario government is proposing new liquor laws that will allow people to take their own bottles of wine to restaurants. Do you strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose or strongly oppose a "bring your own wine" policy for restaurants in Ontario?,' and, 'Do you think a "bring your own wine" policy for restaurants would increase, decrease, or have no impact on the number of people who drink and drive?'

"The results of the poll: There were 19% of Ontarians that strongly support BYOW; 25% who somewhat support; 14% who somewhat oppose; 27% who strongly oppose; 9% were unsure of their support/opposition; and another 7% had no response....

"On the second question: There were 43% of Ontarians who felt there would be an increase in the number of people who drink and drive; 2% who felt there would be a decrease in the number of people who drink and drive; 48% who felt there would be 'no impact'; 6% who were unsure; and 1% who had no response for the question.

"SES polled a random sample of 500 Ontarians, 18 years of age or older," and I'm saying this because I think Mothers Against Drunk Driving is a very important stakeholder on anything to do with the laws of drinking and driving on the highways, and obviously they're not supporting it.

As well, the two police associations—I know the minister said he was talking to the chiefs of police and he mentioned some names, but my understanding, as we speak today—and this comes recently in the last couple of hours—is that the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police has not taken an official position on this bill. We'll have to listen to what they say.

1620

I can tell you as well, I did more research into this. The Police Association of Ontario, which represents 21,000 uniformed officers, including the Ontario provincial police officers, has not got a position on this bill either. So, basically, what you've done is introduced the bill and then gone around to the stakeholders and said, "Do you support this or not?" The ones who want to be on your side will kind of come to you and say, "We'll support you on this." But there was no pre-consultation on this piece of legislation that arrived at an official position on it.

Another point I wanted to bring up that I think is important—and it was raised by the government members earlier—is that we do have a difference of opinion in our caucus on this. There are some people of the 24 members in our caucus who do support this. We're not being told in any way whether we're supporting it or opposing it. Our leader has come forward and said, "You know, guys, this is not a priority piece of legislation. Speak your mind on it."

Certainly, we're not being like the Liberals. We're not being told we have to vote in favour of this piece of legislation. I did want to put that on the record, because I think it's very important that it is on the record. As I said, I will be voting against it, and I mentioned the police consultations, because I think that's very important.

I don't know if anybody in the room is aware of or has travelled much on Highway 11 in the past, but most people in the province of Ontario who have travelled to Muskoka or into the north will have heard of the Webers chain of restaurants. The one restaurant on Highway 11, just north of Orillia, was owned previously by Paul Weber Sr and was operated until just recently by his son Paul Weber Jr and his brother John. I talked to John. John's a friend of mine, and he's a person who now has two large dining room restaurants that are licensed in Orillia and Barrie. They're called the Webers Downtowners.

I have a lot of respect for these people. They are entrepreneurs. Over the years, the Webers have employed literally hundreds and hundreds of people in the Orillia and Barrie areas. I've got to tell you, I have a lot of respect for them, and I want you to know that Mr Weber approached me and he is adamant. As a restaurant owner, he is very much opposed to this piece of legislation. He's

worried, first of all, about the abuse of his staff, because he's not sure how many people will understand this. How many people will come into the restaurant now with a bottle of rye or a case of beer and say, "I thought I could bring my own booze"? Instead, it's bring your own wine.

Where is the government going with the next step? Are we going to have specialized beer or the small-brewery-type beers? Will that be allowed next? Where are we going with this in the long run? Is it only wine? It's only wine right now, but if there's some kind of pressure on the government, will they cave in to specialized scotches and rums, etc? They may very well do so, and that is a problem. That's a very serious problem, and Mr Weber is opposed to that.

My understanding is that it will actually cost you money in the taxes. You'll lose tax revenues as a result of this. If you do the math, that's my understanding. If we do anything, I would like to know how much it will cost the taxpayers of Ontario by eliminating this.

Second of all, you'd almost think, to listen to the minister and the parliamentary assistant, that these restaurants were all making a fortune. They're working on a very fine line. The business world works on a fine line of 5% or 6%, and this is taking away from any profits they might have. I think, in Ontario, we've done a really good job of promoting our wine industry.

I think that under Andy Brandt the LCBO has done a fantastic job. They've revitalized it. You may not even want to sell it now. But I'm going to tell you, I think the LCBO has done a great job. They really promote our wines. And now we're saying that they're a second-class citizen: Bring in wine from any other place in the country.

Interjection.

Mr Dunlop: No, I'm not trying to be any part of the LCBO. I just happen to think that the Liquor Control Board of Ontario is very well run. I'm someone in my caucus—I don't believe in privatizing it. I know other people do; there's no question about that. We've heard from members from both sides, but I like what LCBO has done.

Now, if LCBO could do anything, if the minister and that government over there could take the lead on anything, why don't we work with the LCBO and pass Norm Miller's bill on recycling bottles? That would be a step in the right direction. OK? Let's pass that bill. I heard Mr Tory speaking about it last night on Goldhawk, and I've heard Mr Miller's bill being discussed in this House. It's very important that we look at our landfills.

I think if we do anything in the liquor industry, we have to get the LCBO to recycle. I'm a strong supporter of that. I know there's been opposition from the LCBO as well as both governments, but I think that would be a step in the right direction for our landfills and will set a great example for the citizens of Ontario. It would set a lot better example than mom and dad heading out for dinner with a bottle of wine and then coming home later in the evening with 99% of it drunk, with a cork in it. I think that's important.

But what about the priorities? I guess I'm going to go back to the priorities for a moment and talk about why—I know it's controversial, but there are so many other things we could be discussing. Someone earlier had mentioned health and education. For example, we've got a late show tonight because the Minister of Education couldn't tell us how much the capping is going to cost. He doesn't know. Either he doesn't know or he just refused to answer, but I think that's an important thing. That's a \$700-million difference in what the minister calculated and what the bureaucrats have said in their report that we finally got through freedom of information. It's terrible that we have to bring in a late show to get an answer as simple as that. I suspect even when he comes in at 6 o'clock, if he even shows up, he won't give us an answer either. It's important that we deal with questions like that.

I asked the minister on one occasion, and wrote to him, about the students in the Trillium Lakelands-Simcoe County District School Board dispute. We've got 150 kids out in the Carden and Dalton area who needed an opportunity. Their families have historically gone to the Orillia and Brechin schools for over 50 years. Suddenly, now they're being told they have to go back to an hour-and-a-half drive to Kirkfield or Lakefield or all these places down in Miss Scott's riding. The families don't want to go. Miss Scott and myself are in favour of it. But the minister's response was pathetic. It was some kind of a bureaucratic letter that said, "We've got a transportation funding formula, and too bad." So he's completely left them out.

Health care, another priority that I think we should be discussing: Why would we not take some time in this House and discuss the need of a children's treatment centre in York-Simcoe? The only area in the province of Ontario that doesn't have a children's treatment centre and the resources for funding is York-Simcoe. The Minister of Finance's own riding is included in that area. We need to have that. We need to have that in Barrie, Orillia, Midland, Newmarket, York region etc, but we're not hearing anything about it. Instead, we're debating on whether we can bring our own wine to dinner.

What about reporting gunshot wounds? There was a piece of legislation that I waited for in the last two sessions in the House. In the last fall and spring sessions, I waited for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to bring forward a piece of legislation—anything would have been OK. He finally did, just before the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police conference in Windsor. He finally walked in with a bill—yes, he's going to bring in mandatory reporting of gunshot wounds. I would hope that we'd be debating something like that, so that doctors and emergency wards etc could get to work on this.

Mr Runciman introduced a resolution last year that was completely ignored. But these are the kinds of things that I think should be debated. Then Bill 88, my own private member's bill, that's an amendment to the security guards act. The Shand inquiry called for 22

recommendations last year. The first recommendation was for an immediate response to an immediate recommendation.

Interjection.

Mr Dunlop: Bill 88. Mr Levac's laughing over there, but Bill 88 brought into account or addressed all the recommendations of the Shand inquiry. There's a bill that the minister says he's going to bring in this fall. I don't know if he will or not, or he'll bring in a government bill, but basically it's the same bill I had. That's what it will be. But we've already been told that. We know that the bureaucrats are worried about that. We should be in here addressing that. The Shand inquiry called for immediate recommendations. Instead, what are we doing? We're talking about bringing our own wine to our restaurants.

1630

There are other things we can talk about. I've got to leave some time for my colleague from Leeds-Grenville. There are a lot of other things I'd like to address in the little bit of time I have left. One thing is this whole idea of something being optional. Someone told me today that if something is optional, it's almost an admission that the program is wrong. It's almost admitting that the program is wrong, because if you leave something optional, half the restaurant owners and people with licences don't like that. What we're seeing now is that apparently it is optional. I'd like to get some clarification on the bill on just what kinds of bars and restaurants are actually included. For example, are strip bars with little dining rooms attached included in this legislation?

Hon Mr Watson: No. Read the bill.

Mr Dunlop: No, I need you stand up and say that. I need you to go through the list and say exactly what's included, because there will always be somebody trying to abuse this, as far as I'm concerned. You'll see people from all over the country walking in, on the backs of their Harley-Davidsons or with their bike gang, with a wine bottle strapped to their backs and hoping they can get in—they're bringing their own wine at this time to the particular dining room, restaurant or whatever you want to call it.

Hon Mr Watson: What do you know about strip clubs?

Mr Dunlop: I know quite a bit about them, but I haven't done anything since 1998.

The Deputy Speaker: I think the member should get back to Bill 96.

Hon Mr Watson: Do your voters know that?

Mr Dunlop: Oh, yes, they know that.

I've enjoyed speaking to this bill, to this point. It's a very interesting bill but I can't support it. When it comes to dealing with impaired drivers, I have a concern. I have to support Mothers Against Drunk Driving. I think they're on the right path.

I'm going to be very interested in the outcome of the consultations. I know we're probably going to see a wide variety of people at those meetings. Obviously the government will line up the agenda with a lot of supporters of the bill—I think there will be other people who will be

opposed to the bill—and in the end the government will win this vote, there's no question about it. But I want to be on the record for being opposed to it at this point.

I want to say that I'm also supportive of people like Mr John Weber from Weber's restaurant who has told me he hasn't had anyone come forward to talk about how much they support the bill. Most people who go to their type of dining room enjoy the great wines they have there. They don't mind paying for it and they like to have a fine meal with their wine. He's not getting a lot of people coming and screaming to bring their own booze.

I'm not sure how many people we are seeing across the province demanding that. We have a few noisy people who are making some comments to the minister's office, but other than that I can't see a great demand for it. With that, I would like to turn it over to my colleague for Leeds-Grenville who will bring out some other very interesting points on this piece of legislation.

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leader of the Opposition):

I really appreciate the opportunity to speak to this legislation. At the outset, I want to compliment my colleague Mr Martiniuk, the member for Cambridge, who is as of a week or so ago the critic for this ministry. I know he will do an outstanding job, as we all in this caucus know he will do. He has an outstanding reputation in his own community. He is a solid individual. I can assure you, Mr Speaker, that when the political winds start to change, he doesn't change political parties, unlike a certain other individual in the House.

Mr Kormos: Who's that?

Mr Runciman: He's sometimes referred to as the junior member for Nepean. He also worked for a former federal member of Parliament, Otto Jelinek. Do you remember him? So I think we know who I'm referring to. We're referring to the now Minister of Consumer and Business Services, certainly a nice fellow. But I always have difficulty with people who sort of put their finger up to see what the wind is like in terms of the political feelings of the voters of the province and then jump into that particular corner of the room. I hope that when you get into this business, you do so on the basis of strong principles, strong beliefs and obviously wanting to do the right thing for the people you represent. I'm not questioning the minister on those completely, but certainly there is some doubt with respect to commitment when you change political philosophies. At some point in your—

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): Something like Winston Churchill.

Mr Runciman: I suppose there's some truth to that as well.

I had the opportunity to serve as the consumer minister, and interestingly enough, there are three of us in this row who had that opportunity: the House leader for the NDP and the member to my right, the dean of the Legislature, Mr Sterling. All three of us had the opportunity to serve in that ministry. I want to take this opportunity to say that, of my eight or nine years in government, if you go back to the Miller government, I

think my time in that ministry was perhaps the most enjoyable. The bureaucracy, the civil service in that ministry are outstanding people who really—

Mr Dunlop: They write great speeches.

Mr Runciman: Well, they do write great speeches, among other things. They certainly served me well, served our government well and my predecessors and successors well. I suspect they had very little to do with this initiative other than receiving direction from the current government, the minister responsible, that “We have to get this in quickly. We want to distract attention from this horrific budget that our government presented, breaking all kinds of solemn and significant promises to the people of Ontario.” The bureaucrats and civil servants, good people that they are, will do what they are asked to do by the government of the day, and we respect that. But certainly this is not something that, in my day, was really ever recommended or promoted by the civil service in the Ministry of Consumer and Business Services.

I also want to mention that during my time, I think Mr Sterling’s time, and that of the member from Niagara Centre, I believe it is, Mr Hudak, we were all served by a wonderful deputy minister, Sandy Lang, who retired and then came back to serve your government briefly to help establish the new children’s ministry, because that was always an interest of hers and part of her background.

I now learn that Ms Lang is very seriously ill, suffering very significant health challenges. I want her, her friends and her family to know that those of us who know Sandy and had the opportunity to work with her are praying for her. We wish her well with the challenges she’s currently facing.

Back to this legislation. We’ve heard a lot today from my colleagues, and I’m sure we’ll hear more from the NDP as well, with respect to priorities. We’ve heard the minister yell across the floor, “If you don’t think this is a serious priority, let’s send it off to committee. Let’s have minimal debate.” The minister, although he’s a relatively new member, should know that’s not the way this place works. The government sets the agenda. We come in here and we debate the legislation you put in front of us. We have a responsibility as the opposition to make sure that all of these issues are thoroughly discussed, thoroughly reviewed. All the points that you and members in support of you raise, Minister, are scrutinized as well and commented upon. That’s the job of Her Majesty’s loyal opposition and we take that responsibility very seriously. So we are going to give this legislation, I would say, extensive scrutiny, extensive investigation.

We’re going to review all of the implications. We heard about liability. We heard about public safety. We heard about impact on small businesses and large businesses as well. I don’t think that they should be excluded from this discussion.

1640

We heard the minister when he made the announcement—I guess it was in June they gave out a press release—and we’ve heard that extended here today by

some of his backbenchers and perhaps by himself—I didn’t catch all of his comments—about extensive consultation. When he had an opportunity to respond to some of the criticisms, I heard him read off a long list of stakeholders, and I think left the impression that these people were all consulted, that they were all part of this process.

That’s not what we’re hearing on this side. In fact, I believe many of the stakeholders who have a serious interest with respect to this kind of initiative felt that they were blindsided, that their trust was abused by the minister and by the government. In fact, when they heard about this, it was when it was announced to the public. There was no consultation for most of these folks. They were told after the fact, “This is a done deal. Get on with it. Enjoy the rest of your life. Let’s talk about other issues.” That’s what happened when they went in to see the minister. I’m very concerned about this. “Look, there’s no point in talking about this. We’re going ahead with it.” That was the approach, not consultation, not an effort to engage these individuals in serious discussions about any concerns they and their organizations might have. No. “Ram it through. Don’t talk to them. Tell them what’s good for them. Tell them what’s good for their own stakeholders. Tell them what’s good for the province of Ontario.”

We’ve been told that this is a pretty sexy piece of legislation. We can dump this out. Any time you talk about sex or booze, the media are going to be very interested. They’ll be covering this story intensively if we’re talking about sex or booze. That’s sort of a given around this place. In fact, I think there’s an assumption on the part of the government that this is a very popular measure as well.

I wonder if I could get a glass of water, please.

Thank you, the senior member for Nepean.

I think that clearly, as one of my colleagues referenced a poll done by SES Research, a very respected polling firm, Ontarians are pretty much divided on this issue. The reality is that this does have surface appeal. It appeals to me on the surface. This issue was raised when I was the minister, and I’m sure it was raised when Mr Sterling was the minister. I’m not sure if Mr Kormos was in the seat long enough to have it raised, but if he had been there long enough, it would have been raised by someone and suggested that this was a sexy thing to do. “If we’re bringing in something that’s unpopular, if we’re bringing in something that’s really negative and nasty, the serious violation of promises that we made to the people of Ontario, this might be something we can slip in and distract the press gallery and the public at large.”

It’s pretty cynical politics, very cynical politics. It hasn’t worked. We’re going to make sure, from our side of the House, that there is a lengthy discussion and that the people who have, I think, in many respects, very legitimate concerns are going to have the opportunity to be heard and to put those concerns on the record. The minister has indicated a willingness to go to committee, and that’s fine because certainly we will be insisting that

it go to committee and that we have full public hearings. Anyone who has a real interest, a legitimate interest in being on the record on this issue will have the opportunity to express that.

We haven't heard a lot of that from the government. They've been shutting out stakeholders, not giving them an opportunity. We hope that when this goes to committee, they will take the opportunity to appear and not be intimidated by this government or by this minister.

We know. We see it in the health care sector where the minister is constantly berating and taking on the health care sector stakeholders. I think, in many respects, they are intimidated by this individual and are not coming out and speaking out in the way they should. We encourage them to do so, to step back and take a look at this individual. His conduct is not appropriate. I'm not suggesting the Minister of Consumer and Business Services is approaching his stakeholders in the same way. I don't think that's his personality. But certainly his reference to some of the stakeholders was that, "We're not going to talk about this. The decision has been taken; live with it. Let's get on with life. Let's talk about other issues, other concerns." Despite the tone, which may be congenial, which this member is known for, it's the nature of the comment, the nature of the shutting the door on real discussion and debate on this initiative.

I want to take this opportunity to put a few things on the record, quotes and concerns from people who haven't been listened to and in fact whom the public was led to believe were onside in support of this initiative.

Again, Mr Dunlop, the member from Orillia, Simcoe, was talking about the SES survey. I had a press release provided me by MADD Canada which came out on June 10, right after the minister made the announcement in the House. It was headlined "MADD Canada 'Very Disappointed' in Minister's Broken Promise," another broken promise.

"Mothers Against Drunk Driving sees Consumer and Business Services Minister Jim Watson's BYOB bill as another broken promise" of this Ontario Liberal government. "MADD ... fears this legislation will lead to increased incidents of impaired driving on Ontario's roads.

"We are very disappointed in Minister Watson's irresponsible actions with this issue," says Andrew Murie, national executive director of MADD Canada. "He has ignored the recommended reforms of the liquor law task force and is moving forward on his own personal BYOB agenda. It is not good public policy to revamp the province's liquor laws piecemeal." I would call it seat-of-the-pants, but we're seeing more and more of that from this government.

We saw it with respect to the agricultural sector, and I want to mention that in a few minutes, in relationship to priorities. When the Premier attended the plowing match—

Interjection: He got booed.

Mr Runciman: He got booed. He said, "We have no money for you folks," and he got booed. But a week or two weeks later, he came up with \$30 million which two

weeks before at the plowing match he didn't have. He got booed. What do we call that? We call that government by crowd reaction. This is seat-of-the-pants government as well. MADD calls it piecemeal legislation and the breaking of a promise.

This government had just come into office, and it met with the stakeholders. That's part of the process when you come into government: A new minister meets with the stakeholders. He met with MADD, and I'm quoting again from Mr Murie, the executive director of MADD:

"When we met with the minister, he stated his ... initiative would be part of a bigger liquor law reform package. It appears Minister Watson was making another promise this government wasn't going to keep."

Mr Baird: Who said this?

Mr Runciman: This is the national executive director of MADD Canada.

Going on with quotes from Mr Murie, "What is irresponsible with this legislation is that the other reforms recommended by the task force have been ignored so that the minister could cherry-pick this more seemingly popular initiative."

I wanted to put MADD's press release on the record, the comments from Mr Murie. Certainly the minister, when he made the announcement, was indicating that the groups that are opposed to drinking and driving, and do an excellent job in this province—OCCID, MADD and others who have lost loved ones due to impaired driving—were certainly not happy with the way this minister conducted himself with respect to this file and the way he blindsided stakeholders with this announcement: no notice, no consultation. "This is it, folks. We're going ahead with this."

1650

I also want to talk about a column that didn't get a lot of publicity. It was buried in the June 17 edition of the National Post. It's an article by Jacob Richler. He's quoting some of the businesspeople in the Toronto area, which I again find interesting. These are quotes, comments, feelings, sentiments that haven't really gotten a lot of play. These are business owners.

There's a quote from Mark McEwan, who is a very well known restaurateur in the Toronto area. He's the owner of two of the better-known restaurants, North 44 and Bymark.

Mr Shafiq Qaadri (Etobicoke North): That's Bigliardi's.

Mr Runciman: No, not Bigliardi's. Anyway, Mr McEwan has this to say: "We've been embattled for three years now."

Mr McMeekin: Cam Jackson likes steak.

Mr Runciman: Well, I wonder what the people who attended Mr McGuinty's fundraiser in Windsor and paid \$5,000 a ticket to go in and convince the minister or the Premier of their positions on health care or whatever it might be—you know, one of our members might like steak, but you're selling access to the Premier and to ministers of this government for \$5,000. Is that appropriate? I don't think too many Ontarians, too many hard-

working Ontarians who can't afford a \$5,000 ticket to a Liberal shindig in Windsor, would agree with the approach. In fact, most Liberal—what are they saying here? Local party members didn't even know about it. You had to have pretty deep pockets. I don't know if the Speaker knew about this going on. I suspect he didn't. This was only for the real heavy wallets to come in and influence Liberal policy.

I didn't get Mr McEwan's comments on the record. "We've been embattled for three years now,"—this is Mr McEwan, owner of two top Toronto restaurants—"... an industry sideswiped by 9/11, SARS, soaring insurance rates"—which this government doesn't want to do a damned thing about—"and mad cow disease," speaking of steaks. "So what does this government do?"—this Liberal government—"First they ban smoking. Then they're in the ..."—you know what—"because of their budget"—

Mr Baird: Banning sushi.

Mr Runciman: Trying to ban sushi too—"so they throw this thing out without even thinking about it just so they can look better to the average Joe."

Here is a gentleman, Marc Thuet, one-time co-owner of Centro, now consulting at the Rosewater Supper Club. He's quoted, "If you cut profits from wine, the quality of our high-end restaurants is going to drop—they won't be able to afford the two extra guys in the kitchen and the extra waiter up front." This is a concern they have in terms of employment.

Interjections.

Mr Runciman: Well, you can scoff at it. These are people in the business who have legitimate concerns. You don't want to even listen to them. That's the minister: shut them out, closed the door on them, blindsided them with his initiative without even talking to them, without even listening to their concerns. That's the kind of initiative we get from the Liberal government.

Now we have another individual—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr Runciman: We've been talking high-end; now we're talking about the mom-and-pop operations, the ones that quite frequently have a real tough time surviving, frequently see bankruptcies. "And those are the places where people are going to start turning up with \$10 bottles of wine." This is another quote. "Your average trattoria is going to get hurt badly by this," and they may not survive. Well, that may be a stretch, but certainly they are going to have real problems.

I suggest to the minister that he be nice to his stakeholders for a change. Talk to them before you bring an initiative into this House.

Hon Mr Watson: We told them—

Mr Runciman: No, you didn't. We've talked to them. You told them what you were doing, not, "What should I be doing?" You said, "This is what's going to happen, folks. Live with it. Get on with life."

We talked about priorities. Let's see the junior minister in here tomorrow when we're talking about

hospital funding, talking about the Queensway-Carleton Hospital, the Ottawa hospitals, getting less than 1%, is it?

Interjection: Zero point six.

Mr Runciman: Zero point six per cent—

Hon Mr Watson: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The Queensway-Carleton Hospital—

The Deputy Speaker: It's not a point of order. Minister, take your seat, please. Member?

Mr Runciman: If the member feels strongly about this, he has an opportunity. Come here tomorrow and debate the issue.

Again, we're talking about priorities. One thing I'd like to quickly put on the record in the remaining seconds is rural Ontario. We should be in here talking about rural Ontario. There's a real crisis in many parts of rural Ontario today, not just with BSE and cattle farmers, but it has a ripple-down effect with all of the businesses impacted with respect to the problems in rural Ontario. High suicide rates, poverty, people losing their farms, losing their businesses, and what does this government want to talk about early on in the agenda of this House when they say, "We have this significant agenda to bring to the people of Ontario"? What do they want to talk about? Bring your own booze into a restaurant. While people in rural Ontario are suffering—a real crisis in rural Ontario, in small-town Ontario, and you guys have the nerve, the gall, to bring in Bring Your Own Booze into this House. You should be ashamed—

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr Kormos: The leader of the official opposition brings his historic passion to this issue, and I, for one, who have known him for a long, long time, am pleased to see him in this position of leadership with this caucus. His performance over the course of yesterday and today has probably caused a whole lot of his caucus-mates, and indeed members of his party, to reflect on who should have been the real candidate in a leadership convention. I'm proud to see Bob Runciman leading this group of what is undoubtedly a united, cohesive, speaking-with-a-single-voice, ready-to-move-forward group of parliamentarians. I congratulate him.

I'm going to have a chance to speak to this bill in around eight minutes' time, and Mr Bisson from Timmins-James Bay is going to do a two-minute response as well. We're concerned about the fact that, is this it? Is this as good as it gets? Here we are, day two after a hiatus that was incredibly lengthy, a summer break extended for an extra few weeks—the government wanted to make it even longer than it would have been otherwise—and we come back on day two and this is it: Bring your own wine. I suppose the problem is, who in fact—other than Rod Seiling. I don't quarrel with the fact—I'm not sure that he even requested it. Where is the drive coming to get this bill passed and enacted?

I've reflected on that a whole lot. I spent a whole lot of time this past few months reflecting on Bill 96 and, just in my own mind, weighing the pros and cons and considering what some of the dialogue there is that could

be had about it. So I'm going to look forward to the hour that I've got coming up in a few minutes' time. I encourage folks to listen to hear what Mr Bisson from Timmins-James Bay has to say because he's been away from here for a couple of months too.

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): I'd like to add my couple of minutes and compliment the minister for bringing this forward to the House. I have to say that he hasn't done it solely on the spur of the moment; he has already spent considerable time assessing the situation.

What is missing in this debate, in this early debate—and I can see that the members are saying, “Yes, I'm looking forward to speaking on the bill later on,” and stuff like that. What we have missed today is to hear from the opposition that this is voluntary. It's the opportunity to give Ontarians a choice to choose if they want to bring their own. It's also to give our business community, especially the small business community, an opportunity, if they choose, to offer that particular service. What the minister is saying is that we will have enough standards, enough guidelines, to make sure that those who want to do it comply. They can do it in a very safe manner, both for the public and for the business owner.

We are well behind other jurisdictions in Canada, so I have to compliment the minister for bringing this forward—

1700

Interjection: They've had this for 25 years in Quebec.

Mr Sergio: Over 25 years, yes. I would say to the opposition that that is one more reason why they should support this bill: so we can send the bill on the road for consultation, as the minister has expressed, and hear the people, the community and the business people out there and then bring it back into the House for a final decision. But at this stage, I think we should give the bill every opportunity to bring it outside and bring it to the public for consultation. I applaud the minister for bringing this to the House today.

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): First, before I go on, I'd like to thank you for coming to my area and leaving me that note, even though I don't work on Sundays. I'm sure the Liberals are out every Sunday working very hard to get bills like this through. You must be working hard on Sundays to put something like this up. It is a bit of a joke.

You had a year, a whole year, and we got this one. That's pretty good, fellas. I can tell you've been working hard for the last year. You came up with this so we can drink our own wine in a restaurant. Isn't that amazing? What do you do with the bottle after? Do you finish it? I guess that must be what you've got to do.

If you talk to the people in the restaurants—this will be another one of the things where you widely consulted with some of your friends, and that'll be the end of it.

I wanted also to congratulate Bob Runciman. As Mr Kormos mentioned, he's back here with his fire, and I was thinking that as I was coming down the steps. I could

hear you outside, Bob, and I was impressed. You're back here to put the Liberals in their place.

You guys got lucky. You've had an easy time of it. We gave you an easy time to get started. We thought, “Well, you had some good ideas.” You had all those promises: 231. I think there were 232, but they argue with that, and we might go on. You had all those promises, and we were waiting: “When are you going to start coming forward with these promises?” And you come up and tell us that we can drink a bottle of wine in a restaurant. I'm sure the people are so disappointed.

I missed a lot of you at the plowing match. I thought you would have been there with your leader to champion the promises. “We will not raise your taxes.” That's a good one. I'm going to always remember that my taxes won't be raised. You know that thumb that we get from your Premier? Other people give different fingers; I've seen the thumb coming from your Premier, and I noticed all those guys along the front row start getting their thumb up. I don't know what it means, fellas, but be careful.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): It's always a pleasure to follow my good friend from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. This summer, like all of you, I was out there in my riding consulting with voters, the people who bring us to this chamber, and I remember some of the discussions. I remember, for example—and the member from Welland-Thorold or Niagara Centre or whatever it's called nowadays probably would relate to this—a woman in Kapuskasing came to see me and she said, “Gilles, my insurance bill has gone from \$114 a month to 900 bucks a month”—900 bucks a month—“and the only way we're able to deal with it”—do you know why? Because her son who lived at her house happened to get a driver's licence, even though the kid couldn't drive the car. So we had to deal with that. Do you know what she was saying? “Gilles, make sure you go to the Legislature and pass Bring Your Own Wine.” No, I didn't hear her say that. No, she was really interested in doing something about auto insurance.

I met with other people in the riding and they had other issues. For example, many people who are going to be losing their chiropractic services next month were saying, “Jeez, I'm going to have to go to the emergency room if I get into a crisis situation and I don't have the bucks to go to my chiropractor,” and they said, “Gilles, don't forget to come back to the Legislature and debate Bring Your Own Wine.” Every time, they said that.

I've got to say, everybody I talked to in the riding, if I talked to them about hydro, if I talked to them about chiropractor services and if I talked to them about revenue-sharing for First Nations—if I talked to them about anything, the first thing that came out of their lips was, “Bring Your Own Wine: That's really important legislation.”

That's probably the furthest thing from the truth I've ever said around here. I've got to say, guys, is this the best you can do on the first week back in the House? There are all kinds of issues that we've got to deal with,

and I would hope we would take our legislative time to deal with them.

As for the bill, my good friend from Niagara Centre will speak to it, and I will have an opportunity to do so, as will other members of my caucus later. But I just say, let's get back to the real issues, the ones that are front-line for the people of Ontario—not this one.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Questions or comments?

Minister?

Hon Mr Watson: Thanks for the input we received from a number of members.

As my former parliamentary assistant indicated, it was quite clear that the legislation that is before you first and foremost is on a voluntary basis. If a restaurant doesn't want this particular type of service, then quite frankly they don't have to offer it. Secondly, the indication was that the names I read out were supportive. No, these individuals and these groups were consulted because we are a government that believes in consulting stakeholders from a wide variety of different organizations. We offered today to seek unanimous consent to pass this at second reading and send it to committee right away if the opposition wanted to deal with other legislation, and it was the Conservatives and New Democrats who said no to that. You can't push and pull at the same time.

The fact of the matter is that this is legislation that also talks about social responsibility, that doubles the fines for serving underagers. Are the Conservatives, the so-called law-and-order party, against the public safety measures of this legislation? Mr Runciman rants and raves about this not being important legislation. Where was Bob Runciman when they were discussing the great issue of beer on golf courses or extending bar hours? He was right there, front and centre, acting as a cheerleader to the member from Lanark-Carleton.

The fact of the matter is, this is a piece of legislation that is ready. We are quite willing to bring it to committee for public hearings. We look forward to receiving input and any suggestions that members of the public have.

The Deputy Speaker: Thanks for your indulgence. I was looking to my left and nobody was moving anywhere, so I went a little out of the bounds. So now you have two minutes, the member for Cambridge.

Mr Martiniuk: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I'd just like to take this opportunity on behalf of myself, the member from Leeds-Grenville, the most popular acting leader ever, and the member for Simcoe North to thank all the comments from the member for Niagara Centre, the member for Thornhill, the member for Timmins-James Bay, the minister of consumer affairs and, of course, my friend, colleague and seatmate, the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, who always has a pungent comment to deliver to this House.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Kormos: First of all, New Democrats are insistent that this bill go to committee, and not only that this bill go to committee, but that the committee hearings be

adequate enough to hear from a broad range of interested parties in this matter.

I am extremely concerned that MADD, Mothers Against Drunk Driving, for whom I have had and continue to have the greatest regard, were not actively consulted before the preparation of this bill. This government knows, or certainly ought to know, that Mothers Against Drunk Driving has been an eager participant in any number of consultations around legislation and policies that affect, impact on, the consumption of alcohol. I find it outrageous that MADD was not consulted with respect to this legislation. I think it's incredibly important that MADD have certainly more than a 15-minute slot at a cramped committee hearing. I find it imperative that MADD have an opportunity to express its views.

I've got a letter here that Shelley Martel, the member from Nickel Belt, gave me earlier today. It's a letter addressed to the minister from the Greater Sudbury Chamber of Commerce. Here are folks who have concerns about this legislation. They're the kind of folks who certainly ought to be involved in committee hearings. I've made reference to the letter. I suppose I better tell you what's in it. It's addressed to the minister.

1710

It says, "Re: Liquor Licence Amendment Act, 2004.

"Dear Sir:

"The Greater Sudbury Chamber of Commerce represents over 800 businesses in the Greater Sudbury area. Recently, we were approached by a group of chamber members concerned about the proposed changes to the Liquor Licence Act which would allow patrons to bring their own wine to a restaurant.

"These restaurant owners are concerned with this legislation and do not support it for the following reasons:

"The liability of restaurant and bar owners and related insurance costs are already onerous. Patrons bringing in and consuming their own wine raises questions of liability that the government and insurance companies have not fully answered. A full explanation of how this change to legislation will impact the exposure of restaurant owners and the potential increase to insurance costs is required for these businesses to have an understanding of how they will be affected by this initiative.

"It is the opinion of these restaurant owners that the 'Bring Your Own Wine' plan will not result in increased meal sales in their establishments but rather a decrease in wine sales. The resultant loss of profits could only end in reduced employment.

"Inventory management for a restaurant's wine cellar would become extremely difficult when the owner would not know whether patrons would be buying wine or supplying their own.

"Restaurant owners already have strict compliance and reporting requirements. This initiative would likely result in even more paperwork, equipment and reporting, none of which would serve to increase a restaurant's profitability.

"The government has not provided sufficient reasons for changing the legislation to include the 'Bring Your Own Wine' idea. Restaurant owners want to know why the change is being made and who is behind the promotion of this idea.

"The Greater Sudbury Chamber of Commerce would appreciate your response to our members' concerns as soon as possible and we thank you in advance for your co-operation in this matter.

"Sincerely,

"Michael Luciw."

If a page could come here, I'll send this letter down to Hansard so that the incredibly hard-working people in Hansard can refer to it while they're preparing the transcript.

I don't know where this government gets the idea that somehow it is introducing the concept of bringing wine to restaurants. I mean, I remember Ideal Fish and Chips down in Welland on East Main Street. Louie, who ran Ideal Fish and Chips, came back from the war in 1945-46 and fell into, if you will, the fish and chips business. I remember that place even in the 1950s as a kid, picking up a cone of French fries on my way back from the Capitol or Park theatre with my sisters and brothers. It was a dime on a good day.

Louie was a gruff guy who put on quite a bit of weight. It was an old house that had been turned into a fish and chips joint, and Louie would sit at the fryer and he acquired something of a belly over the course of the years. Louie would sit by the fryer and he'd direct his staff—all young women, all of whom loved him but put up with his temperament. Louie, however politically inappropriate it is nowadays, would say, "Girls, a single order of fish and chips," or, "A double order of fish."

There were a couple of backrooms in Louie's Ideal Fish and Chips, right beside the Welland Tribune on East Main Street in Welland. Once I got back to Welland from university and started practising law, I realized that Ideal Fish and Chips was a hangout for judges and lawyers and magistrates and the ilk. As I had been to Ideal as a kid and had eaten takeout on Friday afternoons, Friday evenings for supper, I soon became one of, God bless him, Louie's favoured patrons.

I would be offered a room in the back, one of two backrooms. Louie's instructions to the girls, as he called them: "Girls, Mr Kormos would like a soda pop." It meant that one of the girls—they were hard-working young women—went and got a jug of Louie's homemade wine and poured it into a very cheap and scarred cup. Louie didn't charge for the soda pop. There was no LCBO label on the wine because of course Louie made it at home. The wine ranged from—well, I suppose the wine was fine. I suppose if you really wanted to know what the definition of "fine" meant, if it was any worse, I wouldn't have drank it; if it was any better, Louie wouldn't have given it to me.

Ideal Fish and Chips had been doing a variation of Bring Your Own Wine for decades. The fish and chips shop burned down some time ago and Louie died. I was at his funeral.

I don't know how this government gets the idea that somehow it's pioneering anything new at all. I'm sure that in posh restaurants here in Toronto, favoured clientele bring their bottles of vintage—some people, and you may know about this, belong to wine clubs. They ship you bottles every month of something that isn't available through the LCBO. I have no personal experience myself, but I'm sure that in any number of posh restaurants here in the city of Toronto, if a patron who's going to drop \$300, \$400 or \$500 on a meal wants to bring his or her own bottle of wine—I suspect that from time to time it happens. I can't say that I've ever witnessed it, I can't say that I've ever been a party to it, but my suspicions are that from time to time it happens.

I am intrigued by the survey that's been referred to. I'm also interested in the, oh, very casual inquiries I made of any number of restaurants that I'm familiar with. As a matter of fact, I think the minister, when he made his announcement, went to a very fine restaurant, a very good restaurant. I think a whole lot of people in this place have been there: Mammina's. You know Mammina's down on Wellesley Street, the north side of Wellesley just west of Yonge Street? It is an excellent Italian restaurant. It is a family-run place. I'm in there from time to time. Outstanding food, excellent prices, and they have established themselves and have become well-known for the fact that they sell LCBO wine for, I think, about five bucks over LCBO prices. So they have sort of broken the standard or breached the standard among restaurateurs. And as I recall, Mammina's endorsed this proposition. Again, I don't begrudge them their position, their opinion, and I certainly don't begrudge them the fact that they've made themselves reasonably popular by selling wine and becoming well-known for selling LCBO wine at but \$5 over LCBO cost. But I do know they serve excellent food and at a very reasonable cost as well. I encourage anybody who wants a decent Italian meal to stop in at Mammina's, just west of Yonge Street there on the north side of Wellesley. But you see, that's Mammina's.

Now, just around the corner from Mammina's is an outstanding Spanish restaurant called Segovia. You know it, don't you, Speaker? And you know the chef-owner, just a wonderful, hard-working—great paella. I've never been able to finish, even with two or three people there, an order of paella, but it makes great take-home fried up the next day with some hopefully Spanish olive oil. Works out just fine. I hear what the owners of Mammina's have to say, but I'd really be interested in what the owner of Segovia has to say. Here's a guy with his staff, who work hard. They work incredibly hard. And they work with a very narrow profit margin. You know that last summer was a deadly one here in Toronto and across Ontario for restaurateurs, for the whole hospitality industry. You also know that in the restaurant industry—and if I'm wrong, somebody's going to correct me. I know that. People don't hesitate to correct me even when I'm right. But I'll tell you, as I understand it, the restaurant industry is so competitive and costs for res-

taurateurs have escalated so much—things like insurance, things like electricity costs and heating costs—that the profit margin on food is very slim, if any at all, and the profit in the restaurant industry is made on wine and spirits. So how are we doing that industry a favour by developing a bring-your-own-wine policy, especially when I haven't heard a public outcry? I haven't received a single letter from a single resident of the riding of Niagara Centre, or any other for that matter, saying, "Oh, please, by all means pass bring-your-own-wine legislation in the province of Ontario."

1720

These folks up here may be supporters of the proposition. They may be here, anxious and eager to see Bring Your Own Wine pass. But I suspect that they're far more interested in what's happening to health care in this province. I suspect they are. I suspect that the folks up here in the visitors' gallery, and other folks who might be watching this right now, are far more interested in the Liberal government's privatization of health services like chiropractic, optometry and physiotherapy. I know that folks where I come from, and I suspect across the province, are far more interested in the Liberal government's refusal to treat kids with autism once they reach the age of six years. I know that folks down where I come from, and indeed across this province, are far more interested in the fact that this government refuses to fund Visudyne treatment for all victims of macular degeneration.

I was more than a little taken aback yesterday when the minister joined with the Premier in announcing Ontarians with disabilities legislation. This is the same minister who is litigating—fighting parents in court—to prevent their kids from getting treatment for autism once they reach the age of six. And it's the same Premier of a government that refuses to fund Visudyne treatment for a large chunk of those victims of macular degeneration. Do you understand what macular degeneration is? I think you do. Macular degeneration causes people to go blind. It is not just a seniors' disease, and it wouldn't matter if it was. Do we somehow do cost benefits and say, "Well, you're over 60, you're over 65, you're not worth investing any health treatment money in because, heck, your days, your years are numbered anyway"? Sorry, don't buy that.

Why would we why would this Legislature, why would this government—in very clear control of this Legislature—not want victims of macular degeneration, who, sure as God made little apples—guaranteed—are going to lose their sight, are going to go blind if it's not treated—why is this government not funding Visudyne treatment for a big chunk of victims of macular degeneration when a whole pile of other jurisdictions across North America are? You see, that's what folks have been talking to me about, and they've been talking to their friends, their families, their co-workers and their neighbours about it too.

The dropout rate that's increasing—alarm bells should be ringing. When all of the hard work that was done—well, quite frankly, the Hall-Dennis report—over the

1960s into the 1970s to increase and improve the retention rate in high school and to democratize post-secondary education—I remember it well. There are more than a few of you my age who remember it too. Call it the democratization of post-secondary education, so that kids like me from working-class, ethnic, immigrant backgrounds could go to college and university too. The growth of community colleges, the growth of university campuses beyond the big-city Ivy League—those WASPy bastions—and we reach a point where we're starting to make real headway in terms of young people being able to access post-secondary education, and now we see doors slammed in their faces across this province.

I suspect that you, all of you as members of this Legislature, like me, have had occasion to talk to families, like I have, who have talked about children, youngsters, investing one year, two years or maybe three years in an honours BA, but then dropping out, not because they can't handle the work, not because they don't still aspire to have a post-secondary education, not because they don't have the talent, the skill and the drive, but because the debt they've accumulated over the course of one, two or three years they felt to be crushing, and the burden they put on their families, maybe with another one, two, three or four more kids left at home ready to go, has been overwhelming for them.

What lost opportunities. We all know that it's skyrocketing tuitions.

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): Frozen.

Mr Kormos: "Frozen," Mr Levac says. Yes, freeze them when they're sky high. Young people need relief. Young people and their families need support so that kids from other than the richest families in this province can go to college and university. What lost opportunity.

I remember the Liberals' first announcement—oh, man. Within days of forming the government they were going to reduce auto insurance premiums by—well, let's settle on the conservative figure; most appropriate, we're talking about the Liberal government—of 10%. Do you see any decrease in insurance premiums? No. Another promise to decrease premiums by another 10%—even less results. Yet what we've seen is an attack on benefits payable by insurance companies to innocent accident victims. Now we've got a proposal being put forward by this government that, oh, people should be able to waive their income replacement benefits. People should be able to waive their drug treatment plan benefits.

As if we haven't got enough of a crisis with as many as 10% of vehicles on the road being uninsured, we're now going to have the balance of drivers grossly underinsured in their pursuit of anything akin or close to affordable auto insurance premiums. That's what folks down where I come from are talking about.

I'll tell you this, like I've had occasion to tell it to you before: I am witness to, and I believe more than a few of you are as well, in contrast to when we were young and people's concern was about not living long enough, senior citizens who are worried about living too long.

We're witnessing people who have worked hard all their lives, who have made significant sacrifices, who have scrimped, who have gone without, who have saved as much as any family possibly could, but in their senior years find themselves unable to afford to live in the home they paid for at least once, probably two or three times if they financed the kids' post-secondary education.

The Deputy Speaker: Member, it's been some time since I heard reference to the bill that's under debate. I'd appreciate it if you'd refer to it on occasion.

Mr Kormos: Bill 96. I'm talking about what is a priority for the people of Ontario. I want to hear where it is in the province of Ontario that Ontarians, wherever they are, the north, small-town Ontario or perhaps here in Toronto, big city Ontario, are clamouring—where are they?—for it.

He talks about choice. Please, choice. Give me a break. I would rather have folks with the choice of sending their kids to a college or university without having to worry about how it's ever going to be paid for because of higher, ever-escalating tuition fees.

Choice? I'd rather have a government understand that it has been a complete and dismal failure at in any way controlling or containing automobile insurance premiums to the point where we will—look, we're suffering a renewed crisis in retention rates in secondary school, a similar crisis in participation in post-secondary education, and now a renewed crisis in uninsured vehicles, and we will soon be introduced, as I said, to the under-insured driver—an innocent victim—as they are lured naively into waiving significant benefit coverage in their pursuit of anything close to affordable insurance premiums.

1730

I'm interested in small-town Ontario. I want to know what the chef-owner of Segovia, a wonderful man, would have to say about this. Heck, there are enough people in this room who frequent the joint, with or without a minister's credit card. Let's hear what George Bigliardi has to say about it over on Church Street at a darned good steak house. Don't get me wrong; as much as we often despair about the incredible amount of public monies that have been invested in Bigliardi's, I want to tell you that—

Mrs Carol Mitchell (Huron-Bruce): Haven't eaten there.

Mr Kormos: Well, look, you know who you are, because I've run into more than a few of you there, on more than a few occasions.

Mrs Mitchell: Oh, you can afford to eat there.

Mr Kormos: You're darned right. It's good steak and George Bigliardi is a hard-working restaurateur. George Bigliardi will tell you—and I know I'm not speaking out of turn—that it's been a tough couple of years for his business as well. He's worked harder than he has ever had to for a thinner and thinner patron base. I'd be interested in seeing what George Bigliardi has to say about Bring Your Own Wine. That's why we need committee hearings.

But heck, don't stop there. What about folks down at the Blue Star in the south end of Welland, King Street? What about that family? It's the third generation of a family working hard, keeping that restaurant going. They make a few bucks' profit selling beer, wine and spirits. I would like to hear what they have to say. More important than what they have to say to me, I'd like to hear what they have to say to the rest of this Legislature. That's why we need broad-based committee hearings.

One thing I do know is this—and I don't know if any members of this Legislature have ever worked as wait staff.

Mrs Mitchell: I have.

Mr Kormos: Be it behind the counter or on your feet waiting tables, it is an unenviable job. It really is.

Mrs Mitchell: A tough job.

Mr Kormos: It's an incredibly tough job, it's an incredibly demanding job and it's an incredibly thankless job. I have nothing but the highest regard for women and men in this province anywhere who work as wait staff. I don't know if you've read a couple of books I've read. One was called Nickel and Dime. Have any of you read that book? It's by a journalist down in the United States who was doing very 1960s sociology, this participatory research stuff. You're familiar with that, I know. She went to work as a waitress in a joint in Key West, then moved up north and worked for a Wal-Mart, then worked for a Molly Maid type of operation, and one other, a fourth one; but just discussing the plight of women, minimum wage workers, in these particular types of industries. Nickel and Dime—a great study. I just finished another book, a memoir called Waitressing, not by anybody who became famous after she waitressed but just about her waitressing years—incredibly skilfully and well written.

This much I know: 15%, if a waiter or waitress is so lucky, on a \$25 or \$30 bottle of wine is a lot more than 15% of a \$5 corkage fee, if indeed patrons will be inclined to include a corkage fee in the total upon which you calculate a tip. I suspect that most patrons, shame on them—well, I just find it incredible.

You talk about Nickel and Dime. I find it incredible how many people weave, bob and cheat and do internal revisionism when it comes to calculating the tip. If you've got enough money to go and eat out, by God, you should have enough to leave at least a 15% tip. I believe that. And don't tell me about how the food was no good, because the waiter or waitress didn't cook the food. Tell the waiter or waitress that the food was crappy but give the waiter or waitress 15% for working hard getting that crappy food to you.

Don't weave and bob, like, "Should it be 15% of the total after taxes or 15% of the total before taxes? Well, the bottle of wine was \$50, so we shouldn't really give 15% of the \$50 because it really only cost \$22 in the liquor store." Do you understand what I'm saying? "We'll calculate the 15% on the liquor store price." No. If you can't afford the tip, you can't afford to eat in the restaurant.

You know darned well that I'm quite prepared to debate minimum wage and the adequacy of it, and to talk about a regime wherein tipping wasn't necessary because people received fair wages. The fact is that, heck, this government has done nothing in terms of minimum wage to change the phenomenon.

So I say to you, I'd very much like to hear from wait staff about the impact of this legislation on their lives, to wit, their paycheques, their incomes, their day-to-day, week-to-week realities. I would also be very interested in hearing from wait staff and bar staff about what they would understand by the impact of somebody who brings two bottles of plonk with them into the restaurant—as compared to having to buy it a bottle at a time—who is told they are cut off. Do you understand what I'm saying? It's one thing, after you're served one bottle of wine and the waiter or waitress says, "I'm sorry, sir/ma'am, I really can't serve you any more." The Liquor Licence Act prohibits it, doesn't it? The customer may not like it. If they are a smart drunk, they'll simply say, "Yes, it's for my own good and will you please call me a cab."

Interjection: "Smart drunk" is an oxymoron.

Mr Kormos: Is "smart drunk" an oxymoron? OK.

But I've got a feeling that the patron who brings two bottles of wine in with him, who doesn't have to rely upon the waiter or waitress to bring the second bottle, is going to be a lot more aggressive and insistent about being served that bottle of wine. I've got a feeling that a patron who brings their own wine is going to be a lot more adamant about their own—well, they do own it. You're going to see this legislation—and I stand to be corrected. If I'm wrong, somebody please say so. What an invite. But I can envision scenario after scenario of waiter/waitress having to get into real tussles with patrons who say, "Well, it's my wine. I brought it. I can darn well drink it if I want to, and if you won't pour it, I will."

I'm very interested in what MADD has to say about this. I know there have been mixed reports on the proposition, which isn't in this legislation—make that very clear. Let's understand this absolutely. This legislation does not include a provision for taking home your unfinished wine.

Let's understand the context of this thing. We have a government here that's put liquor stores and maintained liquor stores in corner stores. This government, through the back door, has pursued and maintained the Tory policy of putting booze in corner stores, in 7-Eleven, Avondale types of stores. Don't shake your head, Speaker. I can show them to you. Take a drive with me. See the Avondale sign and the LCBO sign right beside it. These are the southern emulations of the northern—what do they call the stores up north?

Mr Bisson: Northern stores.

Mr Kormos: Besides that. The small kiosk-type of stores. Everybody has understood the need for those in the northern part of the province. You've got a Liberal government that has such little regard for controlling

access to booze that it has carried on the policy of putting beer, wine and spirits in corner stores.

Mr Bisson: In agency stores. They're called agency stores.

1740

Mr Kormos: They call them agency stores up north. They've adopted that policy down in southern Ontario. The Tories introduced it; the Liberals have gone hell-bent for election in pursuit of it. That is a dangerous and regrettable change of the landscape for those of us—oh, and far from it, teetotalers, please—but for those of us who have great concern about proliferating the access to booze, especially the increasingly unregulated access to booze.

Let's talk about taking your bottle home. I know the argument that if you take the balance of your bottle home, then you're less inclined to want to drink it, so you'll be a little more sober. Let's put this into context. After drinking a substantial part of a bottle of wine, you have no business driving anyway. Maybe you think you do, but you probably don't. At that point, heck, what does it matter if you finish the last third of the bottle, assuming you're not going to be driving?

We have a pretty clear standard now. If this minister, this government, is proposing an abandonment of the standard that a bottle of booze in a car, in this case a bottle of wine, has to be sealed before it can be carried around in a car or a vehicle—in other words, not in your home residence—I want to hear how it proposes to achieve that end.

I've got 20 minutes, and I do want to mention this in the context of Bill 96.

The summer went quickly, didn't it? Down where I come from, down in Niagara Centre, we had all of the summer events. We had the Rose Festival parade and the Pelham Canada Day parade. The folks over at David Chev-Olds on Niagara Street in Welland were their usual generous selves in assisting me with a vehicle in these respective parades, always a North American-made General Motors vehicle. Cathy Robertson, who's a very good friend, just an incredible salesperson, whom I trust absolutely and always have—I've bought cars from her for at least 25 years now—has always been out there driving the David Chev-Olds car with me in that vehicle, walking alongside it, within those parades. In that respect, the summer was a positive one: wonderful ethnic festivals, as you well know, down in your neck of the woods too. I know that for a fact. But a whole lot of fear, a whole lot of concern.

We are, because of rising electricity costs and the government's commitment to the privatization of electricity, witnessing an ongoing hemorrhage of industrial, value added manufacturing jobs from this province, a process that was started with the Brian Mulroney-Ronald Reagan free trade agreement, a process that was aggravated and accelerated with the Jean Chrétien NAFTA agreement, the extension of free trade. You combine free trade with electricity prices that are skyrocketing and that are showing no promise of ever being brought under control

by this government, because this government persists in the Tory policy of privatization of electricity generation for profit.

How do you like Highway 407 so far? If you like 407, you'll love Dalton McGuinty's electricity scheme. If you like being grabbed by your ankles, turned upside down and shaken out of every last nickel, dime or penny that's in any of your pockets, if you like being taken to the cleaners like that, you'll love deregulated, for-profit, privatized electricity generation. If you like having the free trade gun held to your head, should any subsequent government ever try to restore public control and ownership over hydroelectricity generation, then you'll love the Liberals' privatization agenda. We've only had little tastes.

Just as I ask, "Where's the clamour for Bill 96?"—I'm good for five more minutes. Just as, "Where is the public clamour for Bill 96?"—I suppose it has the same volume and intensity as the public clamour for higher insurance rates. Mr Chudleigh's here. He may be speaking—

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton): Thank you for pointing that out.

Mr Kormos: Well, you are. Here we are late into the afternoon. He could be on his way, but he's not.

Mr Chudleigh: No, sir.

Mr Kormos: Mr Chudleigh's here and Mr Chudleigh is, like every other member of this Legislature, looking for that person, that Ontarian, who has been pleading for higher insurance premiums, and is hard-pressed to find him or her.

Look as you might, as well, for the person who is pleading for higher and higher electricity rates, and natural gas is following on its heels. It's going to be a tough winter. It is going to be literally a deadly winter. I feel sorry, although sorry isn't good enough, for seniors this winter who are going to have to turn the heat down, literally, in their own homes because they can't afford the natural gas, propane or electricity rates that are being charged.

And this government talks about smart meters? There's nothing particularly smart—smart meters is a dumb idea. First of all, industry understands full well, because they already have metered electricity. They know when they're paying high rates and low rates. I come from a place where I have pipe workers who show up to work and are being told their shift has been cancelled because the electricity rates are too high for that shift. What good does a smart meter do for a family that has to keep a fridge running 24 hours a day? You can't just plug the fridge in at midnight when the smart meter says it's a little more affordable than during the daytime. That refrigerator, the single largest consumer of electricity, has to run all the time.

The second-largest consumer of electricity is your furnace motor. You knew that, didn't you? So what do you do in wintertime when you need your furnace motor blowing the hot air through the house to try to keep it a little bit warm? Do you say, "Oh, let's only turn the furnace on at midnight when the smart meter says it's

cheaper"? You can't do that. There are going to be seniors this winter suffering because of this government's creation of a regime of unaffordable electrical power costs.

They won't find any relief in their chiropractor or physiotherapist either, because it will be but a few weeks' time when seniors start being forced to pay for privatized chiropractic service. These are the same seniors who fought and sacrificed so much for so long to build public health care. Do you understand what I'm saying? These are the people who are grandparents, some of them great-grandparents. The young pages who are here, these are the people who are their grandparents and great-grandparents, who built public health care in this province, just like they did in other parts of Canada; who built it with vision and passion for their kids and their grandkids, for their community and for their country; who created something distinctly Canadian. And here we have a government that's dismantling public health care, oh, not in a slow, surreptitious way but in a rapid, passionate way.

Mr Chudleigh: That was in the red book, wasn't it?

Mr Kormos: Yeah, P3 hospitals, sure. I'll tell you what was in the red book: They weren't going to have anything to do with P3s. Once these Liberals get elected, all hell-bent for election, it's P3s all the way. Let her rip. Let her roar. Put the pedal to the metal. That's what we've got. They weren't going to privatize electricity either, were they, Mr Chudleigh?

Mr Chudleigh: No, they weren't.

Mr Kormos: Boy, when the Liberals were in opposition and the Tories were proposing the privatization of electricity—well, first of all, Liberals were all over the map.

Mr Chudleigh: They were cruel.

Mr Kormos: No, they weren't. Mr Chudleigh says, "They were cruel." They weren't cruel to the private energy sector. Somebody was sitting at that keyboard typing the fundraising letters out to those private energy sector guys, sealed with a kiss, XXOO. Dalton was like a little rabbit, jumping from—

The Deputy Speaker: I just remind the member from Niagara Centre that your five minutes are up. You now have to refer to Bill 96 again.

Mr Kormos: I never knew you for a clock-watcher, but here it is, Wednesday afternoon, close to—of course we're talking about Bill 96. We're talking about exactly what it is that the people of this province want. I'll tell you what's not in the bill: that the minister told us he was doubling the fines for violations. That's just simply not the case. Indeed, if you take a look, you'll see that all that's being changed is the minimum fine, not the maximum fine. That doesn't mean doubling the fine. The fact is, under the Provincial Offences Act, as you well know, a justice of the peace can still suspend sentence or impose a fine lower than the minimum fine—they can. Minimum fines mean nothing in provincial offences legislation—zip, diddly-squat—because the Provincial Offences Act specifically gives a magistrate, a provincial

court judge, a justice of the peace the power to impose a fine lower than the minimum fine. So talk about doubling the fines is simply not the case. Nothing has been done with the maximum fine—that's what doubling the fine means. In the case of one offence, the minimum fine has been increased from \$100 to \$200—ooh—and in another case from \$500 to \$1,000. That's not even keeping up with inflation in terms of the age of these particular statutes.

1750

The other thing that the statute doesn't do is change the police power to vacate a licensed premise. Somehow the people who want to brag about this bill talk about their amendment—section 3 of the bill, which will become new subsections 34(3.1) and (3.2) of the act. The police already have the power to clear a licensed establishment. They have the power to arrest—an arrest for a breach of the peace, or apprehended breach of the peace, of a licensed establishment. It's one of the ace cards that police officers keep up their sleeve, the old arrest with no charge. And it surprises the daylighters out of most people who get arrested, because they think they have to be charged, but the old police officer, or young one, arrests to prevent a breach of the peace—common-law arrest powers—escorts the person out, and doesn't have to lay a charge. Now, mind you, I can imagine an experienced police officer, who was using his authority under the Liquor Licence Act as it exists now, clearing a place because there have to be certain pre-conditions. He has to fear or apprehend a significant breach of the peace. He can't just go in there willy-nilly, arbitrarily, and say, "I don't like the kind of beer you're serving. You've got to clear this joint." The police officer has to exercise that power in the Liquor Licence Act with certain prerequisites, but I have a feeling that a well-educated and well-trained police officer—and the cops I know are—would interpret somebody's refusal to abide with their lawful order, the authority given to them by the Liquor Licence Act, as maybe even—dare I say it?—"obstruct police." You'd think about it, wouldn't you? You'd try it. You'd say, "Okay, now you're not busted for a breach of the peace, you're busted for 'obstruct police' and you're charged with it and we'll let the judge decide whether this one's going to stick, after, of course, you appear in front of the JP tomorrow morning at bail court."

So I don't know where the ministry is coming from, saying that the amendments to subsections 34(3.1) and (3.2) are somehow new law. What is going on here? It's the second time this week that this question will be asked, but what is this minister smoking? Not of the same minister, mind you. To talk about section 3 of the bill amending the act in an imperative way is just absolute nonsense. There isn't the youngest rookie out of Aylmer who couldn't tell you about the existing powers that a police officer has to enforce his or her request that the patrons of a bar clear it and clear it now, because that request is a lawful order made under the Liquor Licence Act. The law permits that police officer to do it, and that police officer has certain recourse if people don't obey

his lawful order. So that leaves us with precious little else.

We've got no substance to the claim that these important amendments radically rectify a lapse, a shortcoming, in the bill. I'm hard-pressed to understand how the minister talks about doubling the fines, when in fact the maximum fines, which is the critical part, remain unchanged, and when even doubling the minimum penalty, which doesn't amount to doubling the fines, doesn't change anything because the Provincial Offences Act—maybe this government—let's hear some legislation. Well, no, let's not. Because if you start out talking about legislation to eliminate a JP's or a magistrate's or a judge's power to overrule the minimum penalty, you're going to have police officers increasingly reluctant to lay the charge because they don't want—cops by and large use good common sense and don't want to unduly punish somebody with an irrational or unreasonable minimum fine that they know can't be superseded by a justice of the peace.

I've spent a good five minutes on Bill 96 now. I figure if that ratio of five to one is any good at all, that's good for perhaps 20 minutes of not direct on 96. We're getting close to the hour. Look, as it is, I'm going to have a remnant of time left over.

New Democrats want to make it very clear. This bill has got to go to committee. MADD, the Police Association of Ontario—not the chiefs of police. Heck, if I remember correctly, at one point they were the guys who were recommending the decriminalization of marijuana, a position that of course I didn't dispute, but they're not the ones, the chiefs of police, who are out there on the street doing this work. Talk to a cop who has got to go into a licensed premise problem place. There is probably nothing, short of domestic disputes, more dangerous than going into—is there anything? One and two?

Interjection.

Mr Kormos: They rank pretty darned close, don't they, in terms of—this is not funny stuff in terms of risk to the police officer, in terms of unpredictability, in terms of traps and hidden dangers.

Mr Chudleigh: Drug busts.

Mr Kormos: I'd say not. It can be. But I don't envy the cop who goes into a licensed premise dealing with drunks and who has to, for instance, order them to clear the point because that police officer apprehends a breach of the peace. I've seen and known far too many police officers who, quite frankly, have been seriously injured. It's one of the prices of playing poker for police officers.

We need broad-based public hearings. The chiefs of police—there's nothing wrong with their comments on it, if in fact it was a formal comment. We still have to resolve this little contradiction here. The minister says one thing and my colleague over here in the official opposition, the leader perhaps, the august leader of the official opposition, for whom I have great regard, says another.

I want to hear what real cops have to say. I want to hear what real restaurateurs have to say about this, what small town has to say about it, as well as big city.

Let's not talk about voluntary because the fact is, if restaurants—it's like Sunday shopping. Oh, yes, Sunday opening is real voluntary. Ask the small business people. Ask people like Pupo's Supermarket down in Welland if it was voluntary for them to open on Sunday—a small family-run operation—when all the big supermarkets are open on Sunday. It's no longer voluntary. You've got to do it if you're going to stay alive. This isn't voluntary. If restaurant A is going to provide bring-your-own-wine, then restaurant B is going to be hard-pressed not to. It's no longer voluntary.

I find this government's acquiescence to some master as yet unknown around this issue to be very interesting. Was it one of the people paying those five-grand-a-pop admission prices to a golfing tournament or to a boating trip? How do you get the ear of this government to persuade them to bring stuff forward without effective consultation with the people to be impacted? Who do you pay? There are people out there who would like to know because they're clearly not on the invite list.

So let's have broad-based hearings and then let's have third reading debate, because I'll bet you, dollars to doughnuts, that those committee hearings are going to provide a lot of fuel for third reading debate, that those committee hearings may well persuade those who are soft on the bill now to oppose it, may well persuade those

who are agnostics, if you will, on the bill to take a firm stance, and may well even convince more than a few Liberal backbenchers that the stuff that's put to them as being innocuous fluff can have significant impact on people's lives.

I understand the minister's enthusiasm in getting this turned into law. It's like the untrained puppy at the door anxious to get out, bouncing from paw to paw before it wets the floor. This minister's at that door, eager to get out. It's scratching away at the screen on the aluminum storm.

But I say, whoa, let's invest in committee hearings. That's the democratic way to do it, real committee hearings, broad-based committee hearings. Let's make sure that all those people who have bona fide concerns and important things to say about this legislation get a chance to say those things, and let's ensure then that we have a real third-reading debate, because it's only after that committee hearing process, a real committee hearing process, that the debate can become pertinent and meaningful.

The Deputy Speaker: It now being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 10 of the clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1800.

TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Mercredi 13 octobre 2004

PREMIÈRE LECTURE

Loi de 2004 modifiant la Loi sur l'Assemblée législative, projet de loi 121, <i>M. O'Toole</i>	
Adoptée	3330
Loi de 2004 modifiant la Loi sur l'imposition des corporations (amendes et pénalités non déductibles), projet de loi 122, <i>M^{me} Churley</i>	
Adoptée	3330
Loi de 2004 sur la transparence des questions d'intérêt public, projet de loi 123, <i>M^{me} DiCocco</i>	
Adoptée	3330

DEUXIÈME LECTURE

Loi de 2004 modifiant la Loi sur les permis d'alcool, projet de loi 96, <i>M. Watson</i>	
<i>M. Watson</i>	3343
Débat présumé ajourné	3366

CONTENTS

Wednesday 13 October 2004

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Gasoline tax	
Mr Arnott	3327
Steel industry	
Ms Horwath	3327
Pat Fortune	
Mrs Sandals	3327
Wine industry	
Mr Hudak	3328
Hintonburg Community Association	
Mr Patten	3328
Health premiums	
Mr Yakabuski	3328
Nurses	
Mr Crozier	3329
Ontarians with disabilities legislation	
Mr Duguid	3329
Mr Levac	3329

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

Standing committee on government agencies	
The Speaker	3330
Report deemed adopted	3330

FIRST READINGS

Legislative Assembly Amendment Act, 2004, Bill 121, Mr O'Toole	
Agreed to	3330
Mr O'Toole	3330
Corporations Tax Amendment Act (Fines and Penalties not Deductible), 2004, Bill 122, Ms Churley	
Agreed to	3330
Ms Churley	3330
Transparency in Public Matters Act, 2004, Bill 123, Ms DiCocco	
Agreed to	3330
Ms Di Cocco	3330

ORAL QUESTIONS

Liberal campaign promises	
Mr Runciman	3330
Mr McGuinty	3331
Taxation	
Mr Flaherty	3331
Mr McGuinty	3332

Hepatitis C

Mr Hampton	3332
Mr Smitherman	3333

OMA agreement

Mr Hampton	3334
Mr McGuinty	3334
Mr Smitherman	3334, 3335
Mr Baird	3335

Hydro generation

Mr Hampton	3335
Mr Duncan	3335

Child pornography

Ms Mossop	3336
Mr Bryant	3336
Mr Kwinter	3336

Class size

Mr Klees	3337
Mr Kennedy	3337

Assistance to disabled

Mr Prue	3337
Mr Sorbara	3338

Highway improvement

Mr McNeely	3338
Mr Takhar	3338

Agriculture industry

Mr Hardeman	3338
Mr Peters	3338

Hospital funding

Mr Bisson	3339
Mr Smitherman	3339

PETITIONS

Taxation

Mr Miller	3339
-----------------	------

Optometrists

Mr Kormos	3340
-----------------	------

Alexander Graham Bell Parkway

Mr Levac	3340
----------------	------

Property taxation

Mr O'Toole	3340
------------------	------

Health care services

Ms Martel	3340
-----------------	------

Sewage treatment plant

Mrs Van Bommel	3341
----------------------	------

Health care

Mr Martiniuk	3341
--------------------	------

Chiropractic services

Mr Brown	3341
----------------	------

Landfill

Mr Dunlop	3341
-----------------	------

Tuition

Ms Martel	3342
-----------------	------

Immigrants' skills

Mr Delaney	3342
------------------	------

Leslie M. Frost Centre

Ms Scott	3342
----------------	------

Senior citizens

Mr Levac	3342
----------------	------

Eye examinations

Ms Martel	3343
-----------------	------

SECOND READINGS

Liquor Licence Amendment Act, 2004, Bill 96, Mr Watson

Mr Watson	3343, 3349, 3359
Mr McMeekin	3346
Mr Barrett	3348
Mr Kormos	3348, 3357, 3359
Mr Delaney	3348
Mr Baird	3348
Mr Martiniuk	3349, 3359
Mr Dunlop	3351
Mr Runciman	3354
Mr Sergio	3358
Mr Murdoch	3358
Mr Bisson	3358
Debate deemed adjourned	3366

OTHER BUSINESS

Legislative pages

The Speaker	3329
-------------------	------

Continued overleaf



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Thursday 14 October 2004

Jeudi 14 octobre 2004



Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 14 October 2004

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 14 octobre 2004

*The House met at 1000.
Prayers.*

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

PALLIATIVE CARE

Mrs Donna H. Cansfield (Etobicoke Centre): I move that, in the opinion of this House, the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care should, within one year, introduce a strategy that deals comprehensively and in an integrated manner with the provision of palliative care in Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Mrs Cansfield has moved ballot item number 31, that, in the opinion of this House, the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care should, within one year, introduce a strategy that deals comprehensively and in an integrated manner with the provision of palliative care in Ontario.

Pursuant to standing order 96, Mrs Cansfield, you have 10 minutes.

Mrs Cansfield: It is my pleasure to rise in the House and ask today for the support of my colleagues on this resolution, this motion. The demand for palliative care within Ontario has grown substantially in the last number of years. As we go back to maybe 25 years ago, we were fortunate enough in places such as Windsor and possibly Burlington and some others, where people with some foresight actually put in place palliative care resolutions in their communities and provided that service in the community. Throughout those years many of those hospices have had to struggle to stay alive. It's an interesting parody when you think about what they do; in fact, they provide end-of-life care.

Recently Ipsos-Reid produced a poll that indicated that over 90% of the people who were polled indicated they would prefer to die with dignity in their home. Interestingly enough, 75% of those people die in hospitals. Only 6% said they felt they could care for the people they loved at the end of life in their home. So you can see that there is an extraordinary need in our community to be able to deal with end-of-life care.

The challenge for us is, how do we do it? Currently, even though at this time our volunteerism has substantially decreased, it has exploded within this particular community. I could quote statistics for you: 600,000 hours in over 400 communities with 90 hospices are

given by volunteers to provide palliative care support for the end of life. When you think about what the communities are prepared to do, then I think it's incumbent upon us as a government to provide the kind of leadership they need for the standard of care, because that's the difference. That's what is happening.

When I did my homework and I looked around the province, I found that in some cases community care access provides support services to a hospice; in others, they do not. In some, there are communities that have the support services with means where they can raise the money to support their local hospice; in other communities, they cannot.

As we, as a community and as a government, say that we want people to live and to work with dignity throughout their life and to be able to provide that for them, that we want their children to be well-educated, that we want to have a good economy, it seems imperative to me that we also look to end-of-life care to provide that same kind of dignity to people, so that when they make the choice of where they choose to die, they can die with the same dignity that they have lived. I can't think of something else that's more positive that we can give to people today, yet that service isn't provided in an equitable fashion across this province.

There are some communities that have no support services. There is no reason for that. There are some that are not able to provide the standards because they don't have the support in terms of the educational provisions. As I said, there are others that certainly do not have the financial means to provide it.

I think we have the resources. There is a commitment from the federal government to provide for long-term home care and palliative care. Certainly, if you heard the question I raised in the House, the Honourable George Smitherman, Minister of Health, has indicated that it is a wish of this government to do exactly the same thing. We have the resources and the means to do it and now I ask you for the will to do it, because I think this is the most important thing we can do to provide a legacy, one of many that we will leave as government in the next number of years.

When I go back and think about my own involvement with a hospice, it really started in my church with two extraordinarily people, Marjorie Pitchford and Meade Wright. Meade has since passed away. Marjorie recognized that when Meade's wife was dying, there was no place, no resource other than the church to support that individual. Having come from England and knowing what hospices could do in England, she realized there

was a need within the community, in our particular community. As you know, I have a very senior population, although, trust me, palliative care isn't restricted to the elderly. We have had patients and clients in the Dorothy Ley Hospice who have been infants, where parents have needed that kind of support from their community as that child was ending their time of life.

I was fortunate to be part of the first 17 people who were in the Dorothy Ley Hospice. Marjorie's vision and Meade's vision as individuals, and Dr Ley, who allowed us to use her name to start that hospice, enabled us to pull into that community an extraordinary number of volunteers who wanted to give back to the people in the community their support, their care and their love during a very difficult time for their friends, their families, their neighbours, and sometimes just for strangers because they were people who cared.

I think it's now time for us as a government, as I said, to support that foundation. It's there; it's in our communities. Now let's build the house that needs to go around it. Let's provide the support and the services that are there. No longer should somebody have to die in a hospital. It's not designed for dying; it's designed to get fixed up and get out again. There actually were hospitals where they put a surcharge on that bed if you took too long to die. That's criminal when you think about it.

1010

I remember being with someone, and it was their end of life. They sent him up food trays. That's not what they needed. They needed someone to hold their hand when their family wasn't there, someone to read to them, someone to put the music on, someone to be in that room and have a presence with them when it was the time of end of life, whether it was in that hospital room, whether it's in a day respite house or whether it's in their own home. It's difficult for families. It's part of who we are, I think, in the human psyche, to be able to support our friends, our families, and those around us who, as I said, may be strangers, because we choose to.

Often in this House, you've stood up and you've said, "It's the right thing to do." It is the right thing to do. It's the right thing to put palliative care on a leadership footing with a number of other initiatives that we put into health care in this province, because the time has come, and it's time for us to look at the universality of it, to look at its equity, to look to ensure that it is resourced as much as it possibly can within the community, never losing sight of the fact that it is community-based and volunteer-initiated in many instances. Obviously, it's run by people who need and have the background to run a hospice, but I don't think we ever want to lose that grass-roots initiative of the volunteers who've given in their community, because that's what every good hospice is built upon.

So I ask you today to really consider seriously how this impacts and affects your community, and what you can do as an individual to make a difference in that community. I ask you to go and get involved in your own hospice. You may not be able to give the time, but you certainly can give the support. You can give that moral

support that they need. You can be able to provide, again, through this resolution, the fact that there will be leadership and standards and care.

There's an extraordinary organization called the Hospice Association of Ontario. It has been around for about 15 years. It has coalesced the hospices themselves. They've come out with their own mission statement. They have their act together, they're prepared to move forward, so I think it's time for us to get our act together to move forward.

It's just an extraordinary opportunity where we can work with the local community, work with the municipality, work with the people in the hospital sector, in the medical sector, in the community care access. If ever there was a chance for us to coalesce and work together, this is one of the times that we can do it. I find that exciting. It's called building. It's called building one of those better communities that we always talk about. As our Premier has said and I reiterate, it truly is the very best thing to do.

I remember many years ago when someone very close to me passed away, and I always still get emotional about it, because if I knew better, I would have done differently, but I didn't. It was someone who was left in a cold room that was sterile and, quite frankly, lonely, and nobody should ever die alone. Everybody deserves to die with those they care around them, or somebody who cares for them, even if they don't know them. That's what a hospice can do. So I ask you to please seriously consider and put your vote into this resolution and make this a part of the history of this province and the history of this Liberal government.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I'm pleased to support this resolution today, and I'm doing so for my colleague Laurie Scott, who's sitting beside me today, as Laurie's voice has unexpectedly disappeared in the last day. So I'm delivering Laurie's thoughts for her.

Hospice Awareness Week is an appropriate time for us in this House to turn our attention to the issues of palliative care and hospice care and the important role that they should play in any caring health care delivery system. We should be striving to allow people to live with dignity and to die with dignity.

Hospice services have developed organically across the province in response to the desire that many people had to end their lives in an environment other than a hospital. It is not a demand that is going to decrease, with 90% of Ontarians wishing to remain in the comfort of their own homes during the final stages of life. Hospitals are able to provide a high standard of end-of-life care, but there will always be a role for hospices and at-home care.

In Laurie's riding of Haliburton-Victoria-Brock, there are palliative care and other services provided by Palliative Care Victoria, SIRCH Community Services and Consulting, and the Haliburton, Northumberland and Victoria Access Centre.

I might add that in Parry Sound-Muskoka we have Hospice Huntsville, Hospice Muskoka, Hospice West Parry Sound and the West Parry Sound Health Centre.

I would like for a moment to give you a little more detail concerning one of these local groups that added hospice care to the range of services they provide to the local community. SIRCH started providing hospice services in 1994-95, and have been promoting hospice care locally through efforts such as Hospice Education Day, which they organized in the following year. It attracted 90 participants. They also facilitated the start of the Palliative and Bereavement Care Coalition for Haliburton County. With a high population of seniors, Haliburton-Victoria-Brock and Parry Sound-Muskoka are ridings that will be very much affected by any plans on the part of this government to deal with the provision of palliative care.

It disturbs me that only 5% to 15% of Ontarians have access to hospital palliative care services. As a member who represents a predominantly rural riding, I'm also interested to see how the minister will ensure that the needs of rural Ontarians are met. Often when money is spent on programs and services, many of these programs and services are set up in such a way that nearby urban residents are disproportionately able to access those programs and services. With many small communities in my riding, I want to make sure that the people who live there will be able to access these programs. The provincial strategy of establishing 16 networks province-wide has the potential to ignore the needs of smaller communities.

I was especially heartened to see that volunteers across the province have decided to devote some of their time to increasing the quality of life for those whose lives are coming to an end. Prior to coming to this House, Laurie was a nurse, and during that time she was frequently struck by the courage and quiet dignity of those facing the end of their lives. Some of her colleagues devoted their time to providing care for those who were dying, and I know that they all strove to make the final hours of their patients as pain-free and dignified as possible.

I would suggest to the minister that he look very seriously at making sure that the rules he puts in place recognize the ability that hospices have of responding to the specific needs of different communities. We need to keep the strength of the hospice system in place. We need to do more in terms of hospital-based palliative care. We need to make it easier for terminally ill people to move from acute care beds to complex continuing-care beds. We need to make sure that the 12,000 terminally ill people who receive care each year are not ignored by the health care system when it is determined that the curative approach is no longer feasible. It is not just care for the terminally ill but also resources for the 39,000 family members who are affected each year.

At a time when we are talking about how to improve the system, we need to take a few moments to recognize the efforts of those people who have worked so hard to build the system that we have in place today. Over 13,000 volunteers are spending over 630,000 hours every year. I had the pleasure of going to the opening of Hospice Muskoka's special room at South Muskoka

Memorial Hospital and congratulating many of my local volunteers.

There are a lot of good things happening in terms of the delivery of hospice and palliative care, and I urge the government, in responding to the need for some overarching strategic direction, to remember that every community is unique, and hospices have grown in response to the needs of their local communities.

In conclusion, I will restate my support for any efforts to make the hospice and palliative care systems in Ontario work better.

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I'm pleased to participate in the debate this morning on a resolution that encourages the Minister of Health to develop a strategy of comprehensive integrated palliative care and present that in a public way in the next year.

The member, at least in the background information that was sent to us, made it very clear—or reminded us, I guess is a better way to describe it—that there is a patchwork of hospices out across the province that provide a varying degree of services, so, depending on where you live, you might get what you need or you might just get what's available. She certainly focused on the fact that because of that patchwork and because we really do want to support all Ontarians, regardless of their age, in their last days, we should really have a strategy that would fund hospices and palliative care to ensure that people can get the services they need wherever they live in the province. She also made it very clear that if you didn't have that, you would have terminally ill patients and their family members making choices about end-of-care options that they might not otherwise want to make or that might be much more expensive; for example, having to spend your final days in a hospital room because there isn't palliative care available.

1020

All of those things are true, and it's just as true that in my own riding there isn't a hospice. But there is a supportive housing program which has supported AIDS patients, which has allowed AIDS patients to die in dignity on-site and which I think, despite not being a hospice, is certainly a candidate that should be considered for palliative care funding.

I want to bring that to the attention of the member in the House today because I think the strategy by the minister should be broader than just funding the current system of hospices or expanding so you have more hospices; it should actually reflect and recognize that there are very important supportive housing projects that deal with terminally ill clients, particularly clients who have specific diseases. They should be considered for funding of palliative care as well.

So I think the strategy should be broader. That's not to undermine the work done by hospices or the Hospice Association of Ontario. It's merely to point out that something different is happening in our community because we don't have a hospice. That's something that is different, very valuable and worthy of funding and recognition as well.

I wanted to spend some time this morning just talking about that program, because I don't think it's unique to our community, in the sense that I really do believe there are other supportive housing projects out there that care for, support and look after terminally ill clients or people who have very specific diseases to the end of their life. They too should be considered as palliative care projects worthy of funding.

The particular program and supportive housing project that I want to talk about is called Maison La Paix. On World AIDS Day, December 1, 1996, this supportive housing project opened in our community. It came about as a dream that was held for a long time by the HIV/AIDS Support Group of Sudbury. They opened a home on that day for those who live with HIV/AIDS. It is a partnership that was formed with the Sisters of Charity of Ottawa. As a result of the partnership, the support group was able to rent and indeed renovate a home in downtown Sudbury to accommodate four residents.

In December 2002, the Sisters of Charity of Ottawa sold the house to the HIV/AIDS Support Group of Sudbury at a nominal cost to allow them to continue their work. But it was very much based on that initial partnership that the funds were even available at the outset for the support group to actually acquire the home, renovate it and have clients come to stay.

The mission of Maison La Paix is to provide a home where people who live with HIV/AIDS and who need assistance or total care are welcome. At Maison La Paix they very much find the ability to have their needs met by trained personnel. They are also able to both live and, if they choose, die with dignity surrounded by friends, caregivers, family members and people who are close to them. The goal has always been to create a home-like atmosphere, to ensure the quality of life for everybody and to collaborate not just with friends and families but with other health care providers outside of that environment to ensure clients get the health care they need.

This home is quite unique in northeastern Ontario—frankly, it's unique in northern Ontario—because it is the only home where services are provided in both official languages and where there is no discrimination based on race, colour, language or ethnic origin. It also provides 24-hour attendant care, professional health services, support services, spiritual, pastoral and palliative care as well as just companionship.

The house itself, which I've had a chance to visit, is essentially shared by four clients. It has a modern kitchen, a living room, a guest room and a fenced-in backyard. It even has a smoking area. It is wheelchair-accessible. Residents have private bedrooms but they share bathroom facilities. They do, in this case, pay room and board; they have to because of the funding that this program receives, which I will get into later on. They pay \$500 a month in rent. All the other support services, particularly those provided by caregivers and medical personnel, are provided without charge.

Since its opening in 1996, it has been home to five women and 25 men, most of them from northeastern

Ontario. A number of them were what you'd want to describe as expatriates, who had been out of the community for a long time but came back, making a choice to die in the community. Five of the residents actually have died at the home, surrounded by family, friends and caring staff. There are four residents who are on-site now and there are two on a waiting list.

The staffing is as follows: It is administered by a full-time executive director and staffed by a resident care coordinator, an RPN. That RPN is responsible for the care program of each of the residents. There are eight other staff—a combination of personal support workers and registered practical nurses, some full-time, some part-time—who deliver the hands-on care. Their responsibilities include assisting the residents with all aspects of daily living because, as you can appreciate, some are more able than others to deal with their daily basic needs. They also provide a supportive and caring environment to live in.

As well, like in other hospices, there are numerous volunteers who provide support. They drive the clients to medical appointments, deal with other appointments they have outside of their home, deal with palliative care housekeeping and even renovations to the home, and, more significantly, do the bulk of the fundraising, which is necessary in this case to keep this home operational.

There are many partners that Maison La Paix works with in the community. So in that respect it's comparable to the work that hospices do, because hospices as well work with many other community partners. In our case it works with the HAVEN program, which is an HIV clinic at the Sudbury Regional Hospital; the Access AIDS Network; the Point, which is a risk reduction program for injection drug users; the Sudbury Youth Action Centre; Pinegate Addiction Services; the Manitoulin-Sudbury Community Care Access Centre; the Sudbury Regional Palliative Care Association; and the Sudbury and District Health Unit.

The challenge that is currently facing this wonderful facility is government funding, namely, a lack of permanent government funding. When the supportive housing project opened in 1996, it opened with temporary funding from the provincial government under the Homemakers and Nurses Services Act. This is a cost-shared program: 80% provided by the province, 20% provided by the municipality. In this particular case the funding is administered through the municipality by the district of Sudbury social services administration board. However, the municipality, I believe from the inception—I could be corrected about that, but certainly now—has not been able to provide their 20% share. So the government in fact flows 100% of the operating budget, which is \$156,000, and then the city asks for a cheque of 20% back from Maison La Paix, so Maison La Paix gives a cheque of about \$32,000 and change back to the city and the city returns that portion to the province.

That funding of \$156,000 has been frozen since 1998, while every other cost has gone up: electricity, rent—well, not rent, because they've purchased it—certainly

utility costs and trying to raise the salaries of those who provide care. However, the actual costs to operate the facility are much more than \$156,000. That is a temporary funding arrangement the provincial government provides. The actual cost is \$100,000 more than what the board is receiving in order to operate.

Those volunteers are primarily involved in fundraising activities: fundraising through Valley Bingo, fundraising by just asking directly and fundraising through a number of events that take place throughout the year. As well, they have been very lucky that they have been a partner with the United Way, so they get some money that way. They also get money through the Bishop Carter Foundation, the Sudbury Food Bank, the Soup Kitchen—and some other organizations that don't have a lot of money to spare, if the truth were told—the Living Well Fund, which is supported by the Access AIDS Network, and the John Carl MacIsaac Foundation. They also get some summer staff through HRDC. The volunteers and the executive director spend a lot of their time actually trying to find money from various sources to have the \$100,000 they need to actually supplement the money they get from the province.

This is not an arrangement that has worked exceptionally well, despite the best efforts of the executive director and the volunteers. It has become increasingly difficult, in an age where so many other groups and agencies are fundraising out in the community, to actually find the money necessary to continue. It has been essentially very difficult as well because the government share of this funding has been frozen, and the city has been unable for some time now to actually allocate their 20% share.

1030

The added problem that faces this supportive housing project is that they have to have three clients every month for a whole year to obtain full government funding. In most years, they have had 10 months where they have had three of the four clients in place. In some of the summer months they have not had three clients; they have lost two because some of those people want to stay with their family and friends for an extended period of time.

When they have new people coming in, in most of the cases the cocktail of medication they are receiving to try and control their illness makes them feel good for a time, makes them think they can live independently, and a number of them do move into the community into their own apartment and live independently. Often those same clients end up moving back, which is why we continue to have a need, obviously, for the supportive housing project. But we also have to have a recognition from the government that you just can't operate in that way. You have clients who can come and go. They feel good; they live independently. They start to get sick again or get worse, and they come back to use this as a place to die or as a place to obtain increased ongoing support.

So the funding mechanism has been very difficult because every year, because they don't have the neces-

sary three out of four clients in place every month, they lose funding maybe two months of the year, maybe three months of the year. They lose some of that funding because they haven't had the home entirely full, and that makes it very difficult to operate in the long term.

The result, of course, is that it has been very difficult to operate. They have to fundraise excessively, but they really are having difficulty hanging on to their staff. You need very specifically qualified, expert staff in this regard, and they are only able to pay \$10.50 an hour to their personal support workers. Personal support workers who are graduating in our community now can go to Extendicare or Pioneer Manor and get \$14 and \$17 an hour. This funding issue is critical and has to be resolved to provide stable workers but also to provide stable, ongoing operating funds in order to manage what needs to be managed.

The fact of the matter is, since 1998, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has said that this supportive housing project is a priority to receive long-term-care funding—since 1998—and we still do not have ongoing, permanent funding provided through long-term care or any other mechanism to this particular supportive housing project.

In October 2003, the Manitoulin-Sudbury long-term-care supportive housing working group recommended that the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care support this particular project for four clients with ongoing funding through its long-term-care budget, and that still hasn't happened. Two days ago, the agency received a letter from the city saying the city wants to sit and discuss alternate funding arrangements because they're worried about their ongoing involvement, and we don't know what this will mean for this agency.

I say in conclusion, because my time is running out, that we have a very significant, important and wonderful supportive housing project that I think meets the goals and needs the member has outlined. It deals with a very specific clientele and has allowed a number of those patients to die in dignity, surrounded by caregivers in the facility. Like other supportive housing projects, it also needs to be considered in a palliative care strategy. More importantly, it should be provided funding now by the ministry to allow it to operate without many of the ongoing concerns that it has.

Mr Shafiq Qadri (Etobicoke North): It's a privilege to speak in support of this resolution of my fellow Etobicoke MPP, Ms Donna Cansfield.

Yes, it is time for a comprehensive and integrated plan for palliative care in Ontario. I also, Speaker, notify you and this House that I'm going to share some of my time with the MPPs from Perth-Middlesex, Niagara Falls and Etobicoke-Lakeshore.

Ultimately, we're speaking about supporting services that are of a multi-dimensional nature, whether they're emotional, physical, practical—such as funding and housing issues—or even spiritual.

As has been mentioned, Canada, like North America, like the world, is undergoing a demographic shift. There

is actually a progressive greying of the country, and while cancer and other terminal illnesses are not restricted merely to the aging population, nevertheless they do bear a disproportionate share of these kinds of illnesses; for example, cancer. That's why it's particularly important that we bring to bear the best practices, knowledge of both art and science, medicine and sociology, to the end of life that many of our clients, patients and the citizens of Ontario are going to face. Ultimately, what we're asking is, with what dignity, with what humanity will these individuals be able to live out their last remaining days? Ultimately, this is what I would consider the mark of a civilized society or, in the phrase of Pierre Elliott Trudeau, a just society. That's why it's important for us to really broadly publish and essentially institutionalize these practices in a system-wide infrastructure.

There are a number of issues to speak under; for example, even simply the words that we use. I recall in my civilian capacity before this place, as a family doctor, an individual who came with chronic, and eventually it turned out to be terminal, hepatitis B. As we kind of blithely wrote those particular words on the diagnostic part of the chart and on some of the forms that we actually hand out to the patient or family, it was brought to my attention that when you actually write the words "terminal liver cancer" on, for example, an X-ray requisition and hand it to the family, what does that actually provoke in the family? For example, when you're dealing with patients who have these ultimately consuming illnesses, how do you break the news? What language do you use? Are you aware of the full impact and perhaps even of the intensity of the words that you're using to in fact even end up removing the very hope and very dignity of their remaining days? You'll be interested to know that this alone, this area of, for example, what words you should engage your terminally ill patients with, has become a whole discipline, a whole industry, a whole avenue of publication in and of itself.

Another very important issue, particularly with the hospice and palliative care side, is pain management. I can tell you, for example, as a doctor, that individuals with, say, terminal liver cancer and others—especially those who have had what we call metastasized cancers, meaning cancers that have left home and spread to other parts of the body, say from the liver to the lung and to the bone and so on—these individuals suffer a type of pain that is perhaps unknown to the rest of us. We as physicians and the nursing community and nurses' aides, and even, I would say, the administrators, constantly struggle with that fine balance, as the MPP from Nickel Belt just mentioned, with that cocktail of medications—too much codeine or too much morphine—because there's a fine balance between analgesia and drowsiness and actually maintaining the patients in a coherent manner. So it's very important that we get our best practices out into the public, not only in our nursing homes, our residential homes, our hospitals and our hospices, but even for the caregivers at home.

The other aspect I'd like to touch on very quickly is the issue of bereavement, because, of course, the shock that the family itself undergoes perhaps only begins once that individual concerned in fact passes away. So ultimately the question is asked: Do we as a civilized and just society provide opportunities and therapy, if you like, and oversight as to how a family will grieve and actually deal with the death, ultimately, of their loved one? This is particularly challenging and wrenching when there are children involved, and it seems that the younger they are, at least with some at the age of understanding, they have a permanent void, which is often very, very difficult to fill. They seem to be both stunned and stunted. This, of course, requires an added measure of awareness and sensitivity to all the various caregivers.

1040

It's well known in medical circles that after, say, a marriage of 20, 30 or 40 years, if one of the spouses passes away, it's a well-known phenomenon that the surviving spouse is at extreme risk for all the various ills that men and women are heir to. So it's important that we as a society bring together all our collective understanding, and that's why I support this resolution brought forth by my colleague from Etobicoke Centre.

To conclude, from the European Institute of Oncology there was a policy statement that it is now time for palliative care to be part of overall health policy. We know how to improve care, and we must now integrate that knowledge more clearly into everyday practice.

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I'm very pleased to join in the debate with respect to the motion on the floor. I'd just like to say that I received a letter from the member with respect to this resolution. In my riding we have community care access through Simcoe county, which I believe is doing a very good job with respect to caring for seniors and doing the allocation that they need to do. But we certainly need more resources in our riding with respect to home care and also long-term care because of the growth that's happening in the riding.

I attended a groundbreaking for Hospice Simcoe, which I think does a great job within my riding. They're trying to set up their own location, and they're doing fundraising now so they can acquire the land and also build a facility so they can provide that care with respect to the terminally ill. I know we've also done a lot of work, and we've been working with the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, regarding the cancer care centre not only at Royal Victoria Hospital but also at South Lake, which would provide the radiation services we need. One project that I'm involved in through the Barrie Rotary Club is providing housing facilities at the Royal Victoria Hospital site for cancer care for family members so they can be there while their loved ones are receiving treatment. So there certainly needs to be a strategy, and also money needs to be put forth for this particular type of care.

I'd also like to mention that there's one other area in my riding that's very important, and that's this children's

treatment centre which I've been working on with the minister, Dr Marie Bountrogianni. We're going to be having a number of people come and visit my constituency office tomorrow for a petition because we've been trying to get a children's treatment centre, not only for Simcoe but also for York, for many years. It actually was approved for funding in a previous year, but that has now been put under review by the minister, and she says that she's working with the district health councils on this project. But it's not good enough, because the children's treatment centre is very important for my riding, and it hasn't happened. So we're going to be petitioning the minister to make sure that it happens, and that's going to be happening at my constituency office tomorrow at 11 am, because it's very important that that happens.

I know the critic, Cam Jackson, is going to have a lot more to say on this, and I'm going to give him some time, but certainly a strategy is a good idea. The problem is that you have to have the funding put in place, and I don't think it's totally clear what the member wants with respect to palliative care. That's going to have to be determined before we can move forward on this, because it's important that we get it right and we start providing the sources of funds and the type of care that's actually needed in the community.

Mr John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex): Stafford Shannon died in his own bed in the house that he built with his own hands. Stafford Shannon was my father-in-law, and he passed away last summer. There is an inequity across this province regarding the level of service that is provided to those who are at the end of their life. My wife's family was blessed that her father was able to die in his own bed in the house that he built with his own hands. I can assure you that the angel of mercy that the hospice and the palliative care people in the north end of Hastings county provided for my wife's family was remarkable.

The point I want to make here today in support of my friend the member from Etobicoke Centre is: Should we not have a province where this is allowed, is provided, for all of our citizens? It's more compassionate to die in your own bed. It's better for the system; it's better for the families. It's better, I think, to have a society that recognizes that unique moment when we pass on to another life.

I can personally share how very important it was for my mother-in-law and for my wife's family to have those services provided, and I agree with the member for Etobicoke Centre that it is unfair that there isn't an equitable distribution of this tremendous service. I want to say to the people who are providing this service that they truly are angels of mercy. I know in my own riding that Stratford Family Services and the North Perth Hospice, which is run by Sharon Johnson—the wife of my predecessor, Bert Johnson—a remarkable angel of mercy in my riding. I want to say to everybody that I support this bill because, like my father-in-law, Stafford Shannon, people should be able to die in their own home—in his case, in the house that he built with his own hands.

Ms Laurel C. Broten (Etobicoke-Lakeshore): I'm very pleased to stand in support of resolution 19, which calls upon the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to, within a year, "introduce a strategy that deals comprehensively and in an integrated manner with the provision of palliative care in Ontario," and I'm pleased to do so in a week which marks Hospice Awareness Week across the province.

Hospices provide emotional, psychological, spiritual and practical human comfort to patients living with life-threatening illnesses and their loved ones, providing much-needed caregiver support, emotional support and bereavement support to families. Most importantly, they're part of a continuum of care in the province which specializes in caring for patients at the end of their lives.

The importance of this continuum of care cannot be underestimated. According to a national poll conducted by Ipsos-Reid and released this September, although more than 90% of Canadians want to die at home, 75% of them still die in hospitals. Only 15% of Canadians receive quality-of-life care at the end of their lives. Six per cent of people who care for family members facing the end of life believe that they would not be able to care for their loved ones if they didn't have the support of an integrated continuum of support.

In my own riding of Etobicoke-Lakeshore we are blessed to have the Dorothy Ley Hospice. The Dorothy Ley Hospice has for many years provided emotional support, practical physical assistance, respite care, complementary therapies, spiritual support, referral and liaison with medical and professional experts, home care teams and bereavement support, and has helped to coordinate the services we have in Etobicoke for those at the end of their lives.

Dorothy Ley Hospice is a non-profit community agency. It's one of 12 volunteer-based home hospice visiting services in Toronto. It also provides a day hospice program. In 2003-04, 431 clients received support through volunteer visiting services provided by over 300 volunteers, who contributed over 20,000 volunteer hours. We hope to see an expansion of the Dorothy Ley Hospice services in our community in Etobicoke in the years to come because we know in Etobicoke, as I know the members of this Legislature do, that how we treat those who are dying in our communities reflects on us as a society. So for those reasons, I'm very pleased to support this resolution.

1050

Mr Kim Craiton (Niagara Falls): I'm pleased to speak on this and recognize the member from Etobicoke Centre for bringing end-of-life care before the House today. It's an important matter, and how we treat people in their final days says a lot about our society and our values. It's time we looked very seriously at how the province can show leadership, kindness and humanity to those who have contributed so much.

Niagara has one of the fastest-aging populations in Ontario, so long-term care is particularly important to the people of Niagara.

With long-term care, we are always faced with the end-of-life issue. It's not acceptable to have a quilt work of differing levels of services for those in differing parts of the province. The time has come to have a consistent, high-quality level of care that our loved ones and their caregivers can count on in their final days. It is a time ridden with worry, anxiety and fear. Comprehensive, integrated quality and consistency are standards that are expected. The member is so right in her motion.

In Niagara Falls and Niagara-on-the-Lake, palliative care services are provided at both our hospitals and most long-term-care homes. These services are provided by caring volunteers who offer priceless emotional and spiritual support, friendship, compassionate listening and bereavement support. In Niagara-on-the-Lake, volunteer support even comes from the volunteers' pet dogs, trained to provide passive yet vital emotional support. We are a much better society because of those who work as volunteers. We are so blessed.

Equipment such as wheelchairs, lift/recliners, walkers—which are lent free of charge—and libraries of books, audio tapes, CDs and videos are made available. All of these contribute to peace of mind in our loved one's final days, whether these services be offered in one's own home, a nursing facility, a hospital or a hospice.

The palliative care model needs a comprehensive, consistent and integrated approach to its delivery. This motion starts on the right track. That is not to say that what is happening now is wrong; it isn't. In fact, in many of our communities the service that is delivered is superb. But it is important that we deliver this quality of caring consistently across the province. This motion needs unanimous support from the House to demonstrate that we really do care.

Mr Speaker, I want to thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak, and I also want to thank my colleague Donna for bringing this resolution forward.

Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington): I'm very pleased to stand today in support of this resolution standing in the name of a very old friend of mine, a long-standing friend from Etobicoke Centre. We have discussed it prior to her tabling it and I have certainly encouraged her, and she will certainly have the full support of the Progressive Conservative caucus.

My involvement with hospices goes back a little over 20 years ago when I joined the Order of St John. I wish I had time to explain the incredibly rich history of Christian charity of one of the oldest palliating organizations on the planet, the Knights Hospitallers of St John of Jerusalem.

As a former Minister of Long-Term Care—in fact, the first one in our province—I had the opportunity and the challenge to try and develop some of the protocols for palliative care that occurs outside of a hospital setting, with community supports. As well, in the city of Burlington we're very blessed to have not only the Carpenter Hospice, which opened in August 2002, with its current chairman, Dr Mo Ali, and its executive director, Mary

McGowan, but we also have Ian Anderson Home, which has been serving our community of Halton for some time.

So we are blessed with a significant infrastructure of support in the province that continues to grow. I've lost count, but there are probably about 20-some residential hospices operating in the province, all with different funding models, all with different approaches, and this is the first issue that has to be dealt with: to get a common funding base and stable long-term funding in place.

I wrote to the Minister of Health, Mr Smitherman, on January 22, a lengthy letter specifically setting out proposals for reforms in this area so that we could change some of the regulations with community care access centres so that they could provide support, through their rather large funding arm, to our hospices.

On March 22, I had a meeting with Mary Kardos Burton and with Vida Vaitonis in order to go over the proposal. However, I have to say for the record that this is a 10-month-old letter. I have yet to receive a response from the minister.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): Shame.

Mr Jackson: Well, these things happen. However, the point that I'm trying to make here is, if we're going to try and do this review in 12 months, perhaps we should make sure that it's resourced properly, because we can't even get an answer to a letter in 10 months. This is an ambitious, important project to be undertaken and it can't be done lightly. So I would ask that the minister respond to Ms Cansfield's resolution as quickly as possible, to give her and this House the assurances they're seeking today as we approve this motion.

There's so much I want to get on the record here, but let me just say, from my perspective as a former minister, having attended federal-provincial-territorial ministers' meetings that deal with this issue, the first and foremost challenge is that palliative care is not really covered under the Canada Health Act unless it occurs within a hospital. Most seniors' services, as we know, are not covered under the Canada Health Act.

Today in Ontario, we have a government which is saying it wants to restructure the future direction of our hospitals and we have a letter from Hilary Short saying to all members of the House that one of the unprotected services in our hospitals will be palliative care. That's not a declaration of war; that's a statement of fact. So we have a situation which has now emerged where palliative care can't always automatically be considered a first line of medical service in our province under the current restraint mode which the government has put us in.

Secondly, the CCACs, which is the most logical envelope in which to fund this service, are under a review right now by Elinor Caplan, a former member of this House. Without getting into all the details of that, the contents of my letter to the minister on January 22 set out what regulations should be changed. It deals with the issue of managed care competition and whether or not you can fund directly to a CCAC, to a hospice, or whether it has to go through an agency. So you have this

revolving door of different personnel coming into an environment in a hospice, which by its very nature needs to stabilize the individuals, the contacts, the interventions and the supports so that in the end stages of life this is an environment of stability, predictability and comfort, and not one of constantly meeting new people. That's a very important issue we raised for the minister.

The FPT meetings—and this is an important piece of information. We know today that the federal government is saying that federal transfer dollars for health care are to be driven into community-based services. If that's the case, Ontario is in an awkward position because we have the best community-based services in Canada. So it's important that the minister realize that this is an opportunity to drive some of those new dollars into palliative care in hospice settings and in home settings—those two. He will not be allowed to drive those into hospitals.

Finally, the issue of drugs: I've been on the floor of this House raising issues about the current government's hard cap on the Cancer Care Ontario drugs. The first drugs that are dropped by Cancer Care Ontario under financial restraint are palliating drugs. We know that. These are drugs that give comfort and do not literally destroy the internal organs as they're trying to pain-manage people through their end of life. So I want to again put on the record the concern we have about a hard cap on palliating drugs or cancer care drugs.

There is a significant amount of work being done across the province. My own region of Halton has done an integration study. So I want to commend the member and encourage the government to get on with this important job on behalf of the people of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate? The member for Etobicoke Centre has two minutes to reply.

Mrs Cansfield: I'd like to thank the members from Haliburton-Victoria-Brock, Parry Sound-Muskoka, Nickel Belt, Etobicoke North, Niagara Falls, Perth-Middlesex, Etobicoke-Lakeshore and Burlington for their support of this resolution.

Bruce Peer, who is the chair of the Hospice Association of Ontario, I think said it very well when he said that, as a society, we fear death more than we recognize the richness at the end of life, and I believe that to be true. I do, however, believe as well that we have hospices in places such as Burlington, Windsor and Etobicoke south that have worked long and hard to help build the foundation in Ontario. There are over 90 of them. With their extraordinary wealth of experience, with the volunteers and their commitment, with the medical profession recognizing the need for pain management, being able to take that pain management necessity out of our emergency rooms and into a hospice setting changes the dynamics in terms of how we spend our medical dollars. We recognize that we can do this far differently, we can do it far better and we can do it with the dignity that people deserve at their end of life.

1100

If you believe that every person has the right to die where they choose to die, pain-free, with the emotional

support of their family and friends and with the bereavement that they know their family and friends will need, then you'll know that palliative care hospices make a huge difference in the lives of approximately 200,000 people who will die this year in Ontario, an estimated 160,000 of whom could benefit from the hospice experience. So, please, I ask for your support for this resolution and thank those members.

OTTAWA HOSPITAL

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): I move, seconded by the member for Lanark-Carleton, that, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario government should increase the budget for the Ottawa Hospital by 6% over the base budget for the base level of service this year over last.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 96, Mr Baird, you have 10 minutes for opening remarks.

Mr Baird: I want to talk about a situation facing the Ottawa Hospital, which serves people in my constituency, but we could be very easily talking about any one of the hospitals in any one of our ridings. We could be talking about the Queensway-Carleton Hospital in Nepean. We could be talking about the Royal Ottawa Hospital in Ottawa. We could be talking about a smaller hospital like the Kemptville or the Winchester hospital, which also serve constituents in my riding.

The Ottawa Hospital is an institution that is incredibly important to me personally. It was where I was born. It's where countless friends and relatives have received excellent care over the years. It's also an incredibly important community institution for those whom I represent. It has three campuses: the Civic campus, the General campus, and the Riverside campus.

A few years ago, this hospital was facing some really significant challenges. I personally worked tremendously hard to help turn the situation around. The government of the day made a very difficult decision to conduct an operational review of the hospital to go in and to see how well the hospital was being run, and made a further difficult decision to appoint a supervisor to basically take over the governance of the hospital. That supervisor was someone by the name of Dennis Timbrell, a tremendously well-respected member by all sides of this House for many years, a former Minister of Health. I think he was Minister of Health for four or five years, which is certainly the longest that anyone spends in that job.

They made a number of big decisions. They appointed a new CEO, Dr Jack Kitts. Dr Jack Kitts has a tremendous amount of respect. Being an anaesthetist, he has a huge amount of respect among the medical community not just at the hospital but in the Valley, where he's from. To be non-partisan, he's a cousin of the former member for Renfrew North, so he's one of the health care giants in our community who is tri-partisan.

They brought in a new board, with some exceptional people. Ray Hession is the chair of that board, a tremen-

dously well-respected former public servant who has a long record of involvement in our community. I could name many of the board members: Kay Stanley, a former teacher, a former federation president of the elementary schoolteachers of Carleton. She serves on that board. We're very lucky to have their time and effort.

This hospital has done a huge amount of work. In that really new turnaround team that was sent in by the Ontario Ministry of Health, they found efficiencies of some \$25 million. That is well in excess of 6% of their budget. They had to make some difficult decisions. They laid off a not-insubstantial number of folks, most in administration, to make sure the hospital was being run better.

With that effort was a real recognition that this hospital, from the operational view, had done their part and that they needed the Ontario government to come to the table. We were able to announce, Mr Timbrell and I on behalf of the former minister, Tony Clement, a \$50-million base budget increase for this hospital, which I think recognized that they were tremendously efficient, but that the government also had to do its part and come to the table and put its money where its mouth is.

Now, \$50 million, to put it in perspective, was the biggest base budget adjustment for any hospital in Canadian history. It recognized that through the operational review and through the work of the turnaround team, the work that the men and women at the hospital, whether nurses, workers, medical staff, the administration and the board, had done, the government had to do its part.

It was really the light at the end of the tunnel. It was also the beginning of a brighter future for the hospital. They had finally, after many years, got their head above water. The fantastic news is that the hospital began to raise money for some needed expansions that were ordered by the ministry and the commission, and the community has really rallied behind that.

To be non-partisan, I can recall the then Leader of the Opposition, Mr McGuinty, delivering a health care report card to the residents of eastern Ontario and Ottawa-Carleton. He did it outside the Civic campus of the Ottawa Hospital. On this big, large report card, despite standing in front of the Ottawa Hospital, it wasn't mentioned. The government, I think it's fair to say, did not get a passing grade on any of the things he mentioned. He didn't include the Ottawa Hospital in it. I think there's a symbolic recognition in that, that he recognized the hospital had gone through some difficult times, that the men and women at the hospital had responded and that the hospital was now on track. That was noted by many in our community.

This resolution is particularly important to be discussed today in this House, on October 14, because tomorrow is going to be a troubling day for many hospitals in Ontario. Tomorrow, October 15, every hospital in the province is required to submit to the ministry a plan to balance their budget. This minister, like previous ministers before him, is asking hospitals to find efficiencies and to balance their budget by the end of the next

fiscal year. I don't begrudge him that. It's a responsible thing to do, to live within our means.

This hospital can find a lot of efficiencies. The only difference is that they found them two or three years ago when an operational review was conducted, when a supervisor was appointed and when a turnaround team went in to clean up the mess at the hospital. Tomorrow they will have to submit a plan to the Ministry of Health that will require them to protect certain programs. It will require them to hire more full-time nurses. It will require them to reduce waiting times. It will require them to balance their budget. It will require them to obey the law, particularly with respect to labour relations, labour negotiations and contracts, many of which they don't even negotiate, that are negotiated centrally—I think of the Ontario Nurses' Association agreement—and they're not going to be able to do it. The minister has generously offered to send in turnaround teams. His own ministry has sent in a turnaround team to this hospital and they've responded to that challenge.

1110

In the resolution in front of us, if you take great note of the resolution, I haven't included anything partisan in it. I haven't included anything disparaging. It's just a request that this House acknowledge—I'm sure many of you have hospitals, either in your constituencies or that serve the families in your constituencies, that are in the same boat.

I'm asking for the support of all members of this House. The 6% figure: Someone said to me that that's two or three times the rate of inflation, but it's not. Health care inflation, according to the independent experts at the Ontario Hospital Association, is running at between 7% and 8%. So they're actually coming in with a proposal that is below the rate of health care inflation.

We know hospitals have increased energy costs, we know they have increased insurance costs, and we know they have increased costs of prescription drugs. I know the Ontario drug benefit plan at the Ministry of Health is up by about 14% this year, and the hospital has that same pressure. At the Ministry of Health, their administration budget is up by 6.89% because they're doing a few extra things in the area of public health, the minister reported to us, things he believes are important, and I share his view. But so too does the Ottawa Hospital have important pressures on it. They have labour negotiations with the Ontario Nurses' Association coming up, which they've had to responsibly budget for. They have to work with CUPE and the OPSEU folks who help make that hospital run every day. They've got to meet that challenge.

This hospital has been a good actor. It is one of the most efficient hospitals in the province. In fact, on a prorated case basis, it's the most efficient academic teaching hospital in the province of Ontario. They have done a tremendous amount.

Six months into the fiscal year, to be told 1.8%—it can't be done. They have to give six months' notice to many of their employees. That's why I'm here before the

House to ask for your support to help the Ottawa Hospital, which serves so many of us, not only in eastern Ontario but indeed in northern Ontario. We need your help and we need your support.

Mr Jim Brownell (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): I am pleased today to speak against this private member's motion put forth by the member from Nepean-Carleton. Certainly the hospital he talks about is in my backyard, so to speak, being from eastern Ontario, Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh. I know full well the problems that in the past have been associated with this hospital and the problems that surfaced during the last Tory regime.

I look at some of the things that have happened at the Ottawa Hospital, where local control was taken away. I look at the Ottawa hospital situation too where the former Tory government tried to shut the Montfort Hospital, the only French-language hospital in the province. I also remember, not having been here in the House but as a citizen in the community, hearing of the outcry against the closure of the paediatric cardiac care unit at CHEO, the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario. These are some examples of what the past Tory government did with the hospital situation in Ottawa.

What my government is doing is looking at taking the pressure off hospitals through community health care, asking hospitals to live within a framework that will be held to accountability agreements. I believe we heard, right from the beginning of our government here in this Legislature, that the silos had to be torn down that kept and defeated the process. Now we're looking at having a transparent process, a continuum of community health care, where home care, long-term care, community mental health, primary care and family health teams and public health are a transparent process, where the silos are torn down and the pressure is taken off our hospitals. It's going to happen. It has already started happening.

I heard the member from Nepean-Carleton talk about nurses. I know that here in our province nurses were fired and nurses took off to the States, and what has happened? They tried to lure them back and many of them are staying.

I say that there is a process in place. We are working with all our hospitals, and certainly with the Ottawa Hospital in particular, to allow them to balance their budget over two years. We already announced, on July 26, 2004, that we had \$10.5 million for the Ottawa Hospital, to help them.

The time of throwing money to hospitals is over. The time now is to look at community health care across the spectrum and for all sectors to work together.

Mr Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): I support the member from Nepean-Carleton's resolution in this regard. Eastern Ontario has been especially hard-hit by the lack of funding by this government to our hospitals, so much so that we believe the Premier has declared war on our hospitals in eastern Ontario. It's all right and good to say that people should be going to

alternative methods of providing these health care services, but they're not there now.

Some of my hospital administrators are saying, "OK, if you want to give us less money, then provide us with some alternatives." One of the alternatives I'm fighting very hard for in the area I represent, the former city of Kanata, is a community access centre there. I've been after the Minister of Health to commit himself to that, as promised in the election, but we have yet to hear any good news from him with regard to that particular area.

A 1.8% increase to the Ottawa Hospital is just not enough to meet the demand of the third-largest hospital in Ontario.

I also want to indicate that the minister and the government should look at different situations with regard to the landscape of Ontario with regard to health care and deal with them in different manners. For instance, in small towns like Carleton Place, Smiths Falls and Perth, the idea of providing alternate health care outside of the hospital setting is not practical. It's not practical from the point of view of setting up two organizations—a clinic and a hospital—to provide much-needed health care, in an ambulatory case, than doing it in a more urban setting. As well, hospitals in smaller communities—as you would know, Mr Speaker, since you represent some small communities—are very essential in attracting physicians to the community. If you have a hospital in Almonte or Carleton Place or Smiths Falls or Perth, there's a much better chance of those small communities attracting physicians to their communities. So for two reasons, the global look at Ontario in terms of providing health care outside of the hospital setting is not necessarily true across all of Ontario.

I would ask the minister to consider these hospitals that are in the smaller communities and that have a multi-faceted purpose which cannot be replaced by some of these other kinds of ideas; to consider taking forward their funding in a different light than perhaps you would be looking at in an urban setting like the city of Ottawa.

I also want to indicate that, for instance, in Perth-Smiths Falls, that's a combined hospital. They did that voluntarily. They joined the two communities so they could rationalize the services in Perth and Smiths Falls, before 1995 when the Health Services Restructuring Commission was set up. They have a 1.4% increase, about \$365,000, to their budget whereas they're facing a 5% increase in wages. The administrator there says to me, "Look, if you want us to cut back services, which we will have to do, then let us know in advance how we can plan for this so we can provide alternate services outside the hospital setting." As I said before, I don't think it makes any sense in Perth or Smiths Falls to look to alternatives, as it would in a more urban setting. So Perth-Smiths Falls is going to have to turn away people or close beds as they get close to the end of their accounting period.

1120

As well, I want to indicate that during the last election, my opponent kept saying to me in different kinds of

settings in all-candidates' meetings that the city of Ottawa was only getting 80% of the hospital funding that the city of Toronto was. Why are they exacerbating the situation now? When they got in power, the government, the members and the party that complained about Ottawa getting a raw deal are making the situation worse by the low level of funding, particularly to our largest hospital, of 1.8%.

So what will happen is that we won't be getting 80% of the funding the city of Toronto gets; we'll now be getting 77% or 78% of the funding the city of Toronto gets under this latest tranche of increases. We in the city of Ottawa rely on the Ottawa Hospital as our primary area of care for people other than children. This kind of funding is going to mean that the people of Ottawa are not going to get the health care service they deserve.

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I'm pleased to participate in the debate today. I want to say at the outset that I'm sympathetic to the resolution that has been put forward by my colleague from Nepean-Carleton. I think the situation in Ottawa is very much indicative of the situation facing many other Ontario hospitals right now that feel very strongly that they have not received an adequate increase to deal with the programs and services they are already delivering.

I thought, in that respect, that I would spend my time this morning talking to you about some northern hospitals that I am familiar with, and I'll be using some media reports about some in other communities, to make the point that this is not an isolated case. The member comes forward today with a resolution that talks about a 6% funding increase for the Ottawa Hospital, and I can tell you that other hospitals in northern Ontario could make the same claim, need to be making the same claim. I hope they are making the same claim to the government and I hope that the government will listen.

Let me begin with the hospital that I know the best, which of course happens to be the one in my own community: the Sudbury Regional Hospital. The Sudbury Regional Hospital, by order of the Health Services Restructuring Commission, is amalgamating three hospitals on to one site, and that site is that of the former Laurentian Hospital operation.

Our hospital also went through an operational review several years ago. It went through it at the request of the board because the board felt very strongly that they were not getting adequate funding from the Ministry of Health to deal with their mandate as a regional centre, and there has been some recognition of that important reality to health ministers. But the fact of the matter is that after the operational review a recovery plan was put in place that will see our hospital pull \$20 million out of the system over the next couple of years. That's going to be very difficult for them to do, because over and above the money they have to pull from the system, they still have an ongoing deficit in fiscal years and, frankly, have had deficits that started at \$32 million, from the point where they were first amalgamated, to a projected deficit this year, which would be in the order of about \$5.5 million.

The recovery plan, which will essentially take \$20 million out of the Sudbury Regional Hospital—we are now in year three of that—was only approved as a multi-year recovery plan by the Ministry of Health in March 2004. So our hospital is in a situation that is probably different from any other hospital in the province in that our hospital will not have to meet its deficit targets, will not have to have a balanced budget, at the same time that other hospitals will. That is because the operation plan and the recovery plan that was approved by the Ministry of Health recognize that there is a limit to the savings that can be found until all the operations and all the programs are on one site. That will not physically take place until 2007-08; we hope it will happen by then. The sad reality is that there hasn't been any construction on phase 2 at the Sudbury Regional Hospital for over three years now—one of those full years under this government. There's still no construction on phase 2, even though we need this hospital in place so that we can have some savings. More importantly, we need the hospital in place so that it can support the new Northern Medical School.

I certainly hope that at some point soon this hospital is going to get approval for its construction plans so that we might actually see some construction start again on this site next year.

The situation is that it won't be until 2007-08 when the books at the Sudbury Regional Hospital can be balanced, because we can't get any more savings until all the programs are on one site, and that won't happen until then.

Our hospital has just received approval from the ministry to have its multi-year recovery plan fill in or be accepted as the accountability agreement, which means we won't have to balance the budget until that time. However, again, it's important to reinforce that we're still going to have a \$5.5-million deficit at the end of this fiscal year, and the hospital must still take \$5 million out of its operating budget this year. In a conversation I had with hospital officials last week, they are going to try to do that without affecting patient volumes, they hope, but it's probably too soon to tell. We will know more about that in the new calendar year.

So that is the situation at the Sudbury Regional Hospital: a \$5.5-million deficit projected for this year, over and above the \$5 million they have to take out of the system before the end of the fiscal year.

Let's look at the North Bay hospital. I raise the North Bay hospital, the Sault Area Hospital and the Timmins and District Hospital because it is clear that northern hospitals are facing deficits this year. There's about \$600 million worth of deficits for all Ontario hospitals this year, and \$44 million of that is for hospitals in northern Ontario. In addition, we know that those northern facilities account for 44% of the hospitals that are facing severe deficits or shortfalls of more than 8%.

I raise that because you will know that not every community in northern Ontario has a hospital. We rely very much on the regional centres to provide services. People have to travel long distances to those regional centres to

get those services. If those hospitals can't have adequate funding to provide service, that doesn't just impact people in North Bay, Timmins or Sault Ste Marie; that impacts people from right across northeastern Ontario who are coming from smaller communities to access care in those regional centres.

In North Bay, the North Bay General Hospital has projected a deficit this year of \$13.5 million, but the province has promised them only a 1% funding increase of \$686,000, so you can see that there's a very significant shortfall for the North Bay hospital.

The media reported—this is on September 8—that the North Bay hospital is going to refuse “to make any cuts despite a looming threat that the province is preparing to force dozens of programs and services to be slashed.

“‘If the ministry wants to make cuts, then they're going to have to do it,’ hospital board chairman Barry Bertrand said in commenting on” a release that went out from the OHA on the level and the magnitude of the cuts that would have to be made in order for hospitals to balance their budgets, as required by this government. Mr Bertrand went on, saying, “We're not going to make any cuts ... If we start cutting, where are these patients going to go?”

As I said earlier, the hospital is projecting a \$13.5-million deficit and is continuing to plead its case with the province. The cost of running the North Bay hospital has increased by about 6% due to insurance, hydro and salary cost hikes, but the province is only promising a 1% increase. Bertrand says, “It's frustrating because we know the level of service it takes to operate.”

This is a hospital that has already hired its own consulting firm to look for and implement savings, and this has been done, so he really doesn't understand what the government hopes to achieve with a turnaround team when in fact this hospital has already done what it can to identify those savings and to make those savings a reality. So there's a more than \$12-million problem at the North Bay hospital, after the 1% increase by the government is factored in.

1130

Here's some information from the Timmins and District Hospital. This is a copy of a letter, dated September 21, 2004, to the minister from Don Wyatt, who is chair of the board at Timmins and District Hospital. It was also co-signed by Esko Vainio, who is the executive director.

It says the following:

“Dear Minister:

“We need your ministry's assistance in order to resolve a forecasted \$3.9 million deficit for FY 2004-05 and a subsequent projected \$6-million deficit in FY 2005-06 in order to balance our hospital budget as required by March 31, 2006.

“We require this financial support since our hospital is in a significant working capital deficit position and we project to be at the maximum of our bank credit line in February 2005. Our hospital is considered efficient in the hospital funding formulas in that the cost per weighted

case for clinical work done here is 1.9% less than expected.

“A total budgetary shortfall of \$6 million on a \$70-million operating budget translates into a 10% reduction in our workforce”—60 full-time jobs. “This would mean a major change to our hospital, its programs/services and our workforce. In order to mitigate reductions of this magnitude, we respectfully request transitional/restructuring funding in order to be able to offer early retirement and voluntary exit packages.... The funding that we would require is in the \$2.5- to \$3-million range.

“We hope that your ministry will be able to assist us to minimize the impact of these staff reductions....”

It goes without saying that once you have those staff gone and you don't replace them, it becomes even harder for the hospital to operate the programs it needs to. I can tell you that Timmins and District provides a lot of services not only to Timmins but to people in Iroquois Falls, people in Hearst, people in all the surrounding areas who have to travel two and three hours to access care at what is a regional centre.

There's another significant budget shortfall. Here is the problem in Sault Ste Marie. The hospital, in June, announced a \$5.8-million deficit for the 12-month period ending March 31, which is nearly triple the \$2.1-million shortfall of the fiscal year 2002-03. The deficit was the third in three years and the sixth in the past eight years. A further \$6-million deficit is forecast for the 2005-06 fiscal year, which would mean they would have to cut \$6 million worth of programs in order to balance their books by the time this government is demanding that they do so.

“The health care facility employs 988 full-time and 777 part-time and casual workers.”

Board chair Bill Walker said Monday—this is dated October 6—“‘It would be absolutely naive to say that we could take \$6 million out of a budget without affecting employment numbers.’ ... He said it would be ‘premature’” at this point “to determine how many jobs would be lost and which departments would suffer” cuts.

That process is now underway with 15 or 20 senior managers, who are trying to study what the possible cuts could look like and what effect they would have on the operation.

In Sault Ste Marie, the problem at the hospital has certainly attracted the attention of the physicians in the community and city council. On Tuesday, September 28, city council in Sault Ste Marie demanded an emergency meeting with local health care representatives and the provincial Minister of Health to discuss the need for additional funding. The resolution was passed by council at that Monday meeting. It came in response to a press conference that had been held on the Friday before by the Algoma West Academy of Medicine, which represents essentially the physicians and the specialists in the community of Sault Ste Marie.

The academy of medicine, represented by Dr Tim Best, the president, said that the hospital and the area residents would face a crisis in service cuts if the Ontario

government doesn't provide more money to the hospital. He said it was impossible to contemplate taking that much money out of the system without having a profound impact on the services and the programs provided to the people of Sault Ste Marie by the Sault Area Hospital.

So here we have the physicians, represented by the academy of medicine, who have been very vocal, very public in a press conference about their concern about the potential impact on the hospital. This has now been debated by city council, which has passed a resolution demanding the minister meet with them to tell them how he is going to deal with this funding crisis so they don't have to cut \$6 million worth of programs from the community. We will see what the response of the minister is.

I thought what was most interesting, however, was an editorial that appeared in the Sault Star about this very issue, essentially saying that:

"Best is not Chicken Little clucking about the sky falling. He's in a position to know just how dire the Sault's situation is, and he's right to share his informed concerns....

"In a community of 75,000, serving an entire district and 300 kilometres distant from the next facility that could offer care, such staffing shortfalls are unacceptable.

"Best indicates that the budget problem locally is a deficiency in the amount of money the province grants. He is criticizing the funding formula as not adequately recognizing the plight of an urban hospital that serves a broad area but is remote from alternative sites."

The editorial goes on. Suffice it to say, they say very clearly that the hospital shouldn't sign any accountability agreement if it's going to impact on services and residents, and the government should deal with this very serious situation as soon as possible.

Let me close by saying this: I'm supportive of the motion that was put forward by the member because the situation facing the Ottawa Hospital is a situation that is facing many other hospitals. I've tried to focus on the ones in northern Ontario because, as I said earlier, many residents, not just in the individual communities but residents who live two and three hours away, have to come to these centres because they can't get the care anywhere else. It is imperative that the government deal with it. It's imperative that the government live up to its election promise, which was, "We will bring stability to our hospitals by providing adequate multi-year funding." They should do it now.

Mr Tony C. Wong (Markham): I'm happy to participate in the debate with respect to motion 23 put forward by the member from Nepean-Carleton.

We, the Liberal government, understand that our health care system must start to act like a system. Piecemeal or band-aid solutions are not going to work. We're transforming the system and bringing health care closer to home and allowing communities to decide for themselves what health services should be offered and where.

This motion would take us back to the old approach of the former government that did not work. This is like

throwing everything back at the hospitals and forgetting about community health care. Those days are over.

Hospitals are a very important component of the health care system, but it is only one of a number of components. We are investing heavily in community health care, taking pressure off our hospitals.

Let me remind members of some of our investments: \$103 million in home care; \$406 million in long-term care this year; \$65 million in community mental health; \$600 million over four years for primary care and family health teams; \$273 million for public health; and nine new MRI and CT scanners, including one at Queensway-Carleton Hospital and one at Montfort.

In addition, our agreement with the OMA will take more pressure off emergency rooms in hospitals by providing incentives for doctors to see patients at LTC facilities again and by working with family health teams that would provide 24/7 access to health care.

I want to talk briefly about the accountability agreements, because we're making sure that hospitals sign accountability agreements to ensure that these new investments will lead to more full-time nurses and reduce waiting times.

I want to talk about my own riding's hospital, the Markham Stouffville Hospital. I met with these folks about a week ago. They are taking on the same challenges and experiencing similar pain as many other hospitals are, but they are doing their best in terms of reducing costs in operational reviews. I know they will not be able to meet all the requirements if they want to continue to provide all services, but the point is that they are doing their best to comply with the requirements of our government because they support our approach. They know that there's going to be a lot of pain in the next couple of years, but they also know that this is the only way to deal with health care as a complete system.

1140

Mr John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): It's my pleasure to stand in support of the motion from my colleague from Nepean-Carleton this morning. I want to thank my colleague from Lanark-Carleton for his wise comments on the motion as well.

I want to talk about the Ottawa Hospital here and the funding offer, if you want to call it that, that they've been given by the Ministry of Health, which is woefully inadequate for them to continue with the services that they provide so well.

I want to talk a little bit about Jack Kitts. My colleague from Nepean-Carleton talked about Jack. Jack is my cousin, and we grew up together. There were nine children in the Kitts family and 14 in my family, so we did a lot of to-and-froing in the playgrounds back in the early days. If we weren't having hockey games on Kelly's Pond in the wintertime, we were up in the woods up on Plebons Hill, building forts and having territorial battles, in the summertime. So I know Jack very well, and I know how proud the people from the Ottawa Valley are, particularly the people from Barry's Bay, to have him as the CEO of the Ottawa Hospital. He's doing a marvellous job.

Mr Baird: Is he from Barry's Bay?

Mr Yakabuski: He is from Barry's Bay; born and raised in Barry's Bay. His family originally came from Cormac. What a tremendous job he's doing and what an insult to be told by the Ministry of Health that he's getting 1.8% to run one of the finest hospitals in the province and the tertiary care hospital for people from my riding who need anything advanced that cannot be provided in the hospitals in my riding.

The Liberals in the last election promised "the health care you need, when and where you need it." How does 1.8% for the Ottawa Hospital address that need when, even to maintain the services they currently provide, they need at least 7%? This is again an attack on eastern Ontario, an attack on the rural people of eastern Ontario, and it is not acceptable.

I want to talk about a constituent from my riding, Maureen Reid, who authorized me to use her name, who went to the province of Quebec in August to have a hip replacement done because she was simply tired of waiting. This government has done nothing to address those needs. When you fund hospitals to the tune of 1.8%, how can you fulfill your promise to have more replacements of hips done, more knees, more cataract surgeries, more cardiac surgeries when you're not funding the hospitals where those surgeries are going to be done?

In the middle of a fiscal year, you can't tell people, "This is what your numbers are going to be; this is what you've got to work with." We all know that hospitals have these time requirements with regard to making adjustments.

So what have we got here? We're going to see services cut. Is that in keeping with the promises that this government made prior to their election? Absolutely not.

I want to talk a little bit about hospitals in my riding as well, where the funding numbers—I'll give you an example. The hospital in Deep River, which is getting about a 1% increase to their funding this year—I really have to ask the Minister of Health, are you intending to close the hospital in Deep River? Is that your goal here? They cannot continue to operate and deliver the services that are necessary while receiving a 1% increase in their funding.

This government has to realize that hospitals are a primary component in delivering health care in this province, and they cannot—they talk about accountability, and I am all for accountability. We need that in every facet of government, but what this government is doing does not amount to accountability; it amounts to strangulation. They brought in new legislation, such as Bill 31, which will require more money to be spent by these hospitals because of the requirements in Bill 31, the privacy act. Bill 8, which was an attack on hospital boards across this province, the independent boards of volunteers who work so hard to make these hospitals work better and efficiently—this government is attacking them.

So we cannot accept this kind of funding arrangement for hospitals in this province. We do need accountability, but we have to go about it in a more sensible fashion.

I thank you very much, and I support this motion wholeheartedly by my honourable member.

Mr Mario G. Racco (Thornhill): I am surprised at the notice of motion that the member from Nepean-Carleton put in front of us, and the reason is very simple. We have a plan to address the needs of health care in this province, and by dealing piecemeal, certainly we are not going to do good service for the province of Ontario.

Not only that, the member used to be a cabinet minister under Mike Harris, who once said, "It is not my plan to close hospitals," and then subsequently went ahead with his cabinet and closed 28 hospitals. Certainly they don't have a commitment to the health care of this province.

The Tories in their first two years cut funding for hospitals. The member from Nepean-Carleton was a member of that government. Surely that's an indication of where they stand on health care. Also, the Tories, when they were in government, made a statement about nurses and Hula Hoops. Then they went ahead and fired thousands of them. To do that, they spent \$400 million on firing nurses. After spending \$400 million, they went ahead and spent millions of dollars trying to bring back nurses to Ontario. That's why today we have such a shortage. That's why today our government, the Liberal government of Ontario, is trying to get more nurses into the profession. It's doing that because of the Tories' management—for many years, unfortunately.

The people who are voting for this motion are calling for two-tier medicine. We heard that during the leadership campaign that just ended. Their solution to waiting lists is to allow the rich to buy their way to the front of the line. Our position is very simple. Everybody is treated equally. Everybody has the same opportunity to receive services.

When it comes to health care in Ottawa, let's look at what they did in that area. They took away local control of the Ottawa Hospital. That's what they did. The Tories did that. They tried to close Montfort Hospital, the only French-language hospital in the province. They tried to close the paediatric cardiac care unit at the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario.

Of course the Liberal Party has a different approach. We are investing in community health care, and we are taking pressure off our hospitals so that they can take care of other matters. We are spending \$103 million in home care this year and \$406 million in long-term care this year, and that includes \$191 million to enhance the quality of care in long-term-care facilities. We are spending \$65 million for community mental health and \$600 million over four years for primary care and family health teams. We're also spending \$273 million for public health this year. We are adding nine new MRI and CT scanners, including one at the Queensway-Carleton Hospital and one at Montfort.

The agreement with the OMA would see even more pressure relieved from emergency rooms and hospitals by incenting doctors to see patients in LTC facilities again and by working in family health teams that would pro-

vide 24-hour-a-day, seven-day-a-week access to health care.

We are investing an additional \$469.5 million in new funding for hospitals this year. That is a 4.3% increase, much more than the inflation rate. In total, we are spending \$11.3 billion on hospitals this year. That is \$700 million more than the Tories planned to spend in their famous Magna budget projections. We are making sure that hospitals sign accountability agreements to ensure that those investments lead to more full-time nurses and reduce wait times for cancer care, cardiac care, hip and knee replacement and cataract surgery.

We are doing much more than they did. It's only because they are in opposition today that they are coming with this piecemeal approach. This is not the way to improve our health care in this province. We have an overall approach that we will follow that will be better for all of us.

1150

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): I'm very pleased to have this opportunity to speak in support of the resolution brought forward by the member for Nepean-Carleton.

First of all, I want to commend the member for Nepean-Carleton. I'll say that we, the Progressive Conservative caucus at Queen's Park, are very fortunate to have him on our team. He's bright, energetic, passionate about politics and steadfast in his commitment to solid Conservative principles. I wish he were listening to these compliments.

The constituents of Nepean-Carleton are very fortunate, because they have a very effective voice here in the Legislature. His constituents have recognized this by electing him three times—in 1995, 1999 and 2003—when it was tough sledding for the Conservatives in Ontario. The member for Nepean-Carleton and I have something in common. From time to time I'm reminded that for five years following 1990 I experienced the rather dubious distinction of being the youngest MPP in our caucus, until he came along in 1995, and when he did, I was more than glad to pass along that distinction to him. I'm glad he's still with us to this day.

I also want to congratulate the member on his additional responsibilities in the key role as opposition House leader, as I get back to the resolution that he's brought before the House today.

His resolution calling for a hospital budget increase is important for his riding and for many communities across the province. I know it is timed very well in terms of reinforcing the arguments we need to put forward to ensure that hospitals throughout the province receive the funding required to provide the best possible patient care.

In my 14 years as an MPP, I have worked hand in glove with the people who run our hospitals. I've sought their advice on a regular basis. The nurses, doctors, administrators, staff and volunteers on the hospital and foundation boards are the core, the centre of health care in communities like Fergus, where the Groves Memorial Community Hospital serves a much broader catchment

area. I'm quite familiar with the Groves memorial hospital and how well they care for people. I was born there in 1963, as were our three boys in the latter half of the 1990s when we were residents of the village of Arthur.

Knowing the great work that is done at this hospital, it is disturbing to see almost every hospital in Ontario in a position now where there is a \$600-million shortfall in provincial funding relative to what they require to meet the growing health care needs in their communities. The staff at Groves do a wonderful job at patient care, and in order for them to continue to do their best, I think it's absolutely essential that this government immediately approve their redevelopment plan and allow it to move on to the next stage. More than \$14 million has been raised and pledged by our community for the hospital. We are ready to proceed, but we can't until we get approval from the Ministry of Health for our master plan and for functional planning.

Our community has been waiting for approval, and we have been waiting for a long time. I insist that the ministry move the process along, right now, with the necessary approvals at this stage so the Groves staff can continue their important work. The redevelopment project will be beneficial for health care delivery throughout the hospital's catchment area, and it should not be victim to unnecessary bureaucratic delay.

In Waterloo-Wellington, we are also fortunate to be served by the Palmerston and District Hospital. This hospital, with devoted and compassionate health care providers and effective management, also provides health care that is second to none. I recall a time in the mid-1990s when they, along with the Louise Marshall Hospital in Mount Forest, volunteered to merge, forming the North Wellington Health Care Corp. Their motivation was to ensure they would be in a position to save money and plow those savings back into front-line health services.

Under the current government, the Palmerston hospital, the Mount Forest hospital and the communities they serve are receiving far less than a fair share of funding. Based on calculations provided by hospital staff, the government will take much more in its so-called health care premium than it will invest back into local hospital funding.

To illustrate this point, consider the following: The ministry recently announced it will be providing the hospitals with approximately \$108,000 in new funding, or a 1% increase in their budget. Compare this to the \$60,000 in 2005 that will be taken from the employees of the merged hospitals because of the new health premium, or more accurately, the income tax this government claims will be going to health care—\$108,000 in new funding to the local hospitals as compared to \$60,000 being taken from the employees alone, and \$4 million being taken from the catchment area in terms of higher taxes. Where is the fairness in that?

Mr Speaker, I know my time is up. I want to ask all members of this House to support the resolution being

brought forward this morning by the member for Nepean-Carleton.

Ms Monique M. Smith (Nipissing): I'd like to thank the member for Waterloo-Wellington for his ringing endorsement of his colleague the member for Nepean-Carleton.

We in the Liberal government, the Dalton McGuinty government, are creating a health care system, a challenge the former Tory government shied away from. You will note that in his opening remarks the member for Nepean-Carleton talked about the fact that it was important to live within our means. You will also note that the previous government did no such thing and in fact left us with a \$5.6-billion deficit that we are now struggling with. Our government is committed to creating a health care system.

As noted by the member for Thornhill, Mike Harris and the previous Conservative government stated that it was not their plan to close hospitals but in fact turned around and closed 28 hospitals across the province. As well, they left a mess in a number of communities, not the least of which is Sudbury, which greatly affects my community of Nipissing. You will note that the member for Nickel Belt did give us a long and somewhat protracted review of the case in Sudbury. I do note, however, that she omitted to acknowledge that our government has found an unprecedented solution for the Sudbury General Hospital problems, and we're moving forward with finishing the construction of the hospital and supporting the Northern Medical School, which is very important to everyone in the north.

I want to thank the member for Nickel Belt for talking about my hospital in North Bay, one that's very near and dear to my heart, where I was born—and so many members have indicated where they were born. I speak regularly with the president and CEO of the North Bay General Hospital. I know of their concerns with respect to funding. I speak with them so often that we often joke that I speak to Mark Hurst more than I speak to my mother. We are committed to working with them to ensure that our hospital over the next two years finds a balanced budget. Our hospital is presently working under two sites, and we're moving forward on a redevelopment plan so that we have one site and can find the efficiencies that are necessary to ensure that we get to that goal of a balanced budget in North Bay.

The member for Thornhill discussed at some length some of the community health care initiatives we've undertaken, some of the investments we are taking to ease the pressure on our hospitals and to ensure that health care is provided in our communities where it is best needed and best served.

We are investing \$103 million in home care. Another file that's very close to my heart: We're investing \$406 million in long-term care this year, including \$191 million in enhanced quality-of-care funding. About \$1.2 million of that is going to my riding of Nipissing. I'm very, very pleased to see that. It's an important investment. We are investing an additional \$469 million in new

funding for hospitals this year. That's a 4.3% increase. We understand that our health system needs to start acting more like a system, and we are moving in that direction.

In his opening remarks, the member for Nepean-Carleton indicated that his resolution was "not partisan." Having worked with the member for Nepean-Carleton over the last year and having seen him in action for many years, I would hesitate to endorse that statement and would probably jump to the conclusion that his evening prayers are partisan.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr Baird, you have two minutes to reply.

Mr Baird: I say to the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health, the future of the hospital, which is important to my constituents, isn't a partisan issue. The one-sentence resolution which stands before us simply calls on them getting less than the rate of inflation.

I was disappointed that not one member who represents the city of Ottawa on the government side of the House chose to get up and even speak to this resolution. Not one member from Ottawa on the government side is even present in the House right now—

The Deputy Speaker: May I remind the member that we don't refer to absences.

Mr Baird: —and that's disappointing.

This hospital needs our help. As a local member in a non-partisan fashion, I'm asking for the support of members on all sides of the House. I want to thank the member for Nickel Belt for her support of the resolution. I also want to thank the member for Wellington and the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke for their fine speeches. Most of all, I want to thank the member for Lanark-Carleton for his seconding the motion and for his strong support over the past eight years, particularly in cabinet and at Management Board, for funding for the Ottawa Hospital. We have fought many battles for this hospital, and others, because they're important to men and women in our community.

I hope that members will look at this as a non-partisan thing and say that it doesn't have to be a whipped vote. This is private members' hour. Traditionally, voting members are free to vote how they choose, and this is the generous spirit in which I offer this resolution. I ask for your help and your support for the Ottawa Hospital.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you to all members. The time allowed for private members' public business has now expired.

PALLIATIVE CARE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): We will deal first with ballot item number 31, standing in the name of Mrs Cansfield.

Mrs Cansfield has moved that, in the opinion of this House, the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care should, within one year, introduce a strategy that deals comprehensively and in an integrated manner with the provision of palliative care in Ontario.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?
Carried.

OTTAWA HOSPITAL

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): We will now deal with ballot item number 32, standing in the name of Mr Baird.

Mr Baird has moved that, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario government should increase the budget for the Ottawa Hospital by 6% over the base budget for the base level of service this year over last.

Is it the opinion of the House that the motion should carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1201 to 1206.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr Baird has moved ballot item 32. All those in favour will please rise.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted
Baird, John R.
Dunlop, Garfield
Hardeman, Ernie
Hudak, Tim

Jackson, Cameron
Kormos, Peter
Martel, Shelley
Miller, Norm
Runciman, Robert W.

Scott, Laurie
Sterling, Norman W.
Tascona, Joseph N.
Wilson, Jim
Yakabuski, John

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please rise.

Nays

Arthurs, Wayne
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Bradley, James J.
Brotten, Laurel C.
Brown, Michael A.
Brownell, Jim
Bryant, Michael
Cansfield, Donna H.
Caplan, David
Colle, Mike
Craiton, Kim
Duguid, Brad
Duncan, Dwight

Fonseca, Peter
Gerretsen, John
Hoy, Pat
Jeffrey, Linda
Kular, Kuldip
Kwinter, Monte
Leal, Jeff
Levac, Dave
McMeekin, Ted
Mitchell, Carol
Mossop, Jennifer F.
Parsons, Ernie
Peters, Steve

Phillips, Gerry
Qaadri, Shafiq
Racco, Mario G.
Ramal, Khalil
Rinaldi, Lou
Sandals, Liz
Smith, Monique
Smitherman, George
Van Bommel, Maria
Wong, Tony C.
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 15; the nays are 38.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

All matters having to do with private members' public business having been dealt with, I do now leave the chair. The House will resume at 1:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1209 to 1330.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CANCER TREATMENT

Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): I rise to urge the government to immediately respond to the needs of

cancer patients in York region, Barrie and Simcoe county. The central-east region of the province has the largest population growth in Ontario. In fact, the population is growing 80% faster than the provincial average. The growth rate for residents over the age of 50 is growing 50% faster than the provincial average. Cancer incidence in this region is increasing 25% quicker than the Ontario average, and cancer mortality is increasing 42% higher than the rest of the province.

We have some of the highest increases of incidences of cancer, yet we're still without our cancer centres. My constituents are being forced to travel to Toronto, Sudbury or London for treatment, which is leading to inequitable care, as the commute is too far and too difficult for them to endure, and waiting times for treatment are simply unacceptable.

The government will know that in August 2003, these communities were given a firm commitment by the previous Conservative government, when a compromise was made to build cancer centres in Newmarket and Barrie with four bunkers at each site.

These communities are crying for cancer centres. Signs have already been posted in York region boasting that a cancer centre will be established in 2005, and I'm told that Barrie will be doing the same shortly as they gear up for their major fundraising drive.

There is enormous community expectation and huge patient need. The hospitals are ready to go. They've submitted all of the required information to the Ministry of Health, and they're ready to put a spade in the ground next spring. I urge the McGuinty government to keep this commitment and respond to the needs of cancer patients.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): On September 27, 2004, Premier McGuinty announced that our government will provide up to \$30 million to help the cattle industry deal with the fallout from BSE. Our government fully recognizes the impact of the closed border on cattle and other ruminant industries. This money is going directly to Ontario farmers to help feed and maintain cattle that are being held back from slaughter. Our Minister of Agriculture is working with farmers to ensure that the right mechanism is found to do this. I expect that the details will be announced very shortly.

Ross McCall, president of the Ontario Livestock Dealers' Association, said, "It's heartening to know that you understand and appreciate the devastating financial and equity losses suffered by farmers."

Our farm families are under greater emotional stress than at any time in history. It was challenging for the government to free up \$30 million to fund this initiative, but we recognize the importance of the agri-food industry—the second most important industry economically, and the most important one from the viewpoint of feeding our citizens.

Our farm science is sound. The challenge involves political science.

Farmers make an immeasurable contribution to our economy and our rural communities. They build a stronger Ontario. That's why we are committed to working to strengthen the agricultural industry.

WOODSTOCK GENERAL HOSPITAL

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I stand today to call attention to a very pressing issue in my riding of Oxford, the building of the new Woodstock General Hospital.

Since the early 1990s, community teams have worked hard to make the government of Ontario understand that our community has outgrown the 150-year-old facility in which the Woodstock General Hospital presently resides. Since my election to provincial Parliament in 1995, I have done whatever I can to bring that message to Queen's Park on behalf of my constituents. So I was extremely pleased to announce my government's approval of a new hospital in Woodstock in December 2000.

The hospital board spent the following three years jumping through all the hoops necessary to obtain approvals from the ministry and to move the project along. The community showed tremendous support for the new hospital through massive fundraising, and the municipalities have paved the way for the build.

But then there was an election of a new Liberal government, and everything stalled.

This hospital is in the final stages of approval. In fact, the only thing holding construction back is the approval of the pre-tender drawings and the estimates by the McGuinty government.

The residents of Oxford have become discouraged by the treatment they've received from this government. They have waited patiently and seen another year of construction pass by with no word. Now, people question whether the minister is more concerned with politics than with the health of the residents of Ontario. They think this project has been stalled because it is a political football in a Conservative riding. I would hate to think that this government, which campaigned on a platform of better health care for all Ontarians, would choose to delay a much-needed hospital on the brink of being constructed because it was in an opposition-held riding.

I stand today to ask the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to do the right thing: Sign off on the final approval immediately so that residents of Oxford can enjoy better quality health care as soon as possible. I ask that he not play politics—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Thank you.

RAMADAN

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): Asalam alaykum. I'm honoured to stand in the Ontario Legislature on behalf of the New Democratic Party today to wish the Muslim community of Ontario "Ramadan Mubarek."

The holy month of Ramadan lasts the entire month. Muslims fast during the daylight hours and, in the evening, eat small meals and visit with friends and family. It is a time of worship and contemplation, a time to strengthen family and community ties. Ramadan is also intended to teach social consciousness and solidarity. The prophet Muhammad—peace be upon him—said that the breaking of the fast while one among us is still hungry is unacceptable.

The Muslim community both locally and globally has experienced extreme hardship since September 11, 2001. They have been subjected to unwarranted suspicion, interrogation and stereotyping, to unjust arrests and deportation, as in the case of Maher Arar, which tragically led to his torture and false imprisonment.

The racial, ethnic, religious and geographical targeting that the Muslim community has been forced to endure is unacceptable. The Muslim community has contributed to Ontario greatly—culturally, economically and socially—and it is time that we take this day to recognize and celebrate their very generous contribution.

TORONTO TRANSIT COMMISSION

Mr Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): I rise in the House today on behalf of public transit riders in my riding of Scarborough Southwest in appreciation of the McGuinty government's investment in the Toronto Transit Commission.

Earlier this year, our government was able to assist the TTC in avoiding a 25-cent fare hike. This means that public transit will continue to be affordable for those who need it and use it to commute to school and to work.

Just a few weeks ago, the Minister of Transportation announced the delivery of \$70 million for the maintenance of TTC subways and streetcars. This money is in addition to a \$20-million loan deferral to the TTC, announced earlier this year, and a joint \$1-billion funding commitment announced by the federal and provincial governments, with the city of Toronto, that will invest in subway expansion, streetcar infrastructure improvements, improved bus rapid transit service, and an integrated ticketing system for transit users across the GTA.

A properly funded transit system is vital to the residents of my riding and residents across Toronto and the GTA. Some 1.3 million passengers rely daily on fast and efficient service, on transit vehicles kept in good repair, and on reasonable, stable fares. Some 270,000 of those passengers ride on TTC streetcars every day, and one subway line takes 53,000 automobiles off our roads during rush hour.

That is why I believe public transit riders in Toronto are satisfied with the direction our government is headed when it comes to strengthening our community with good public transit. I'm sure that transit riders across the province are looking forward to our government's continued commitment to public transit, including the provision of a portion of the provincial gas tax to help fund continued public transit growth and help reduce smog and gridlock on our roads.

CHILDREN'S IMMUNIZATION PROGRAM

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): My statement is about trust in child vaccinations.

In the spring, when asked how the McGuinty government planned to spend the new tax revenues, the Premier talked about vaccinations. He said, "Investing in that kind of program in the interests of Ontario's children is the right thing to do," and committed to providing chicken pox vaccinations for all children in Ontario.

Families in Ontario trusted the Premier's commitment that he understood the cost to Ontarians of these vaccinations and their value as preventive medicine.

1340

Imagine my surprise when I received a letter from a family in my riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka who were alarmed because their daughter, who was born on August 31, 2003, is ineligible to receive coverage for a vaccination because she was born 24 hours too early.

I also received a letter from Dr Ibey, who practises in Parry Sound. In his letter he says, "I am at a loss as to why you have excluded some children from this program." He goes on to say, "Children from one year of age to five years of age will not be able to receive chicken pox vaccine."

Dr Ibey notes that after introducing the health premium, this government committed to enhancing preventative health and that the federal government already provides you with funding for these immunizations.

Dr Ibey says, "With these resources, I do not understand why you have decided to exclude this cohort of children. The loss of even one of the children in these two groups due to a preventative illness, when you are funding immunization in all other children as of January 2005, is reprehensible."

When the Premier spoke about vaccinations, families in Ontario trusted that he meant for all children, not just some children.

WORLD SIGHT DAY

Ms Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West): I'm rising today to ask the Legislature to join me in marking and celebrating World Sight Day.

First, I'd like to begin by recognizing Bill Laidlaw, Mary Jardine and Randy Firth, who are with the Canadian National Institute for the Blind. They've joined us in the gallery this afternoon.

With Canadian, Ontario and Toronto head offices located in Don Valley West, the CNIB serves some 50,000 clients around Ontario. It is the agency of first resort for Ontario's blind community. I'd like to recognize in the House the important work the CNIB does every day.

The representatives from the CNIB have joined me in the House today to celebrate World Sight Day. World Sight Day is an international event to raise awareness of the fact and the largely preventable nature of the problem

of global blindness. World Sight Day is a part of Vision 2020, a joint initiative of the World Health Organization and the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness. Vision 2020 aims to eliminate avoidable, preventable blindness by the year 2020. The Vision 2020 strategy seeks to raise awareness of the fact that 80% of blindness could be prevented or cured and to encourage the private and public sector alike to invest in blindness prevention.

I'd like to invite all members of the House to join me in commending the CNIB for its participation in this initiative and in affirming the will of this House to do its part toward Vision 2020's valuable goal of eliminating avoidable, preventable blindness by 2020.

CLASS SIZE

Mr Peter Fonseca (Mississauga East): I rise to speak about class sizes in Ontario. The McGuinty government is increasing opportunities for our children to acquire the best education possible. That is why we are capping class sizes from kindergarten to grade 3 across the province over the next several years. This cap is a real cap of 20 students per class. This initiative benefits our children and grandchildren in their most crucial learning years. In capping class sizes, we are paving a road to success for Ontario's youth.

Students who begin their education in small classes are less likely to drop out, more likely to graduate on time and more likely to take up challenging courses in high school. Smaller class sizes allow students to get more of the attention they need to learn to read, write and do math at a high level.

In this school year alone, we are investing \$90 million for a reduction in primary class sizes. Because of this investment, approximately 1,300 of our elementary schools with primary grades now have smaller classes. Over 1,100 new teachers have been hired to begin the phasing in of smaller class sizes for primary students. Furthermore, we are increasing funding for education by \$854 million in 2004-05.

I'm proud to be part of a government that is committed to forging a genuine partnership among government, teachers and education support workers to improve education in this province.

I would like to recognize Glenforest Secondary School, from the great riding of Mississauga East, here today.

HYDRO GENERATION

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): Mr Speaker, I rise today in the House to bring to your attention another misinformed statement by the third party, this time by the member from Kenora-Rainy River.

Yesterday in the House, the member accused the government of privatizing Ontario's energy supply. But when asked to name one asset that had been privatized, he could not name one. He couldn't because there aren't

any assets that have been privatized. In fact, we've done just the opposite.

By keeping the Ontario Power Generation nuclear inspection services division in public hands, we have reversed the folly of the previous government. Unlike the member opposite, we on this side deal with the facts. For example, when our party argued against the NDP plan to buy a Costa Rican rain forest that they were promoting when they were in government, we had the facts to prove it was wrong to buy a Costa Rican rain forest.

Speaking of facts, the facts with respect to energy are:

We have outlined a new vision for the electricity sector which includes a strong public leadership role.

We are ensuring that Ontario has the power it needs by approving OPG's plan to restart a unit at the Pickering A nuclear plant.

We are working with potential new electricity suppliers, taking the first steps toward replacing coal-burning power plants by 2007.

We have made a commitment to more wind, solar and other renewable energy sources.

We have set a target for reducing Ontario's energy consumption.

We're working to make energy affordable and available, not working with myths and misinformation. We are for public power but power that works, not Costa Rican rain forests.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

HEALTH PROTECTION AND PROMOTION AMENDMENT ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA PROTECTION ET LA PROMOTION DE LA SANTÉ

Mr Smitherman moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 124, An Act to amend the Health Protection and Promotion Act / Projet de loi 124, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la protection et la promotion de la santé.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AMENDMENT ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA PROTECTION DE L'ENVIRONNEMENT

Mr O'Toole moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 125, An Act to regulate the spreading and storage of sewage sludge and biosolids / Projet de loi 125, Loi réglementant l'épandage et le stockage des boues d'épuration et des matières sèches biologiques.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): The bill amends the Environmental Protection Act to require that a person obtain a certificate of approval from the director before spreading or storing sewage sludge or other biosolids products derived from them. A certificate of approval may be subject to testing, recording and reporting requirements, as the director sees fit.

I would like to thank the members of Protect the Ridges and members from my community who have drawn this to my attention.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY AMENDMENT ACT (HARASSMENT), 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA SANTÉ ET LA SÉCURITÉ AU TRAVAIL (HARCÈLEMENT)

Ms Churley moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 126, An Act to amend the Occupational Health and Safety Act to protect workers from harassment in the workplace / Projet de loi 126, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la santé et la sécurité au travail pour protéger les travailleurs contre le harcèlement dans le lieu de travail.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): This is a very important bill for everybody to pass. We all remember the tragic murder of Theresa Vince in 1998, a retail employee who was harassed and murdered by her manager. This bill reflects one of the prime recommendations that came from the inquest. It amends the Occupational Health and Safety Act to require employers to protect workers from harassment in the workplace, to give workers the right to refuse to work in certain circumstances after harassment has occurred, to require an investigation of allegations of work-related harassment, and to require employers to take steps to prevent further occurrences of workplace-related harassment.

1350

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Before I read my statement, I'd like to draw attention to the Ontario chief medical officer of health, Dr Sheela Basrur, and, much more important than that, her parents, who are here in the members' gallery east.

I'm delighted to rise in this House today to introduce a bill entitled the Health Protection and Promotion Amendment Act. It amends the Health Protection and Promotion

Act. The title being a little unwieldy, I prefer to think of it as the independent chief medical officer of health act.

The position of chief medical officer of health is probably not one that most Ontarians think about very often. After all, you don't generally think about your doctor until you have a health problem. The chief medical officer of health, or CMOH, is, in a very real sense, the top doctor for 12 million Ontarians. So it's only when there is a public health problem that has the potential to affect anyone and everyone that this position suddenly takes on its extremely important public profile.

When there is a health crisis and politicians speak, some people listen. But when there is a health crisis and the chief medical officer of health speaks, everybody listens. It is at those times, times when diseases like SARS or West Nile are a real threat, that the chief medical officer of health must be there for his or her patients, all 12 million of them. It is at times like those that the chief medical officer of health must be able to interact with his or her patients without worrying about what the Minister of Health might think, what the effect might be on the government or what the opposition might say. We learned that lesson as a province during Walkerton, West Nile and SARS. We learned that what Ontarians wanted, what they needed, from their chief doctor was his or her undivided attention.

In the wake of the SARS crisis, both the Campbell and Walker reports recommended that the chief medical officer of health be independent, with the authority, and in fact with the duty, to communicate with the public whenever he or she sees fit. He wrote that any doubts about the source, timing or motives of public health information have a corrosive effect on confidence, and addressing this perception and reinforcing the centrality of an independent voice for public health is a key step in promoting public health renewal in Ontario.

With the legislation I have introduced today we are taking that step. If this legislation is passed, future CMOHs will be appointed by the Legislature for a five-year renewable term. An expert recruitment committee would be established, composed of people who best understand the requirements of this critical job: public health doctors, nurses and academics. This committee would screen and interview applicants for the position and, following that process, the committee would recommend a candidate. It would then be up to the standing or select committee of the Legislature to interview the candidate, assess his or her qualifications and report to the Legislature. The Legislature would then vote on that report, accepting or rejecting the candidate. What is important is that the final decision would be made by the Legislature of Ontario, not the minister.

If this proposed legislation is passed, the chief medical officer of health would be required to make an annual report to this Legislature and be authorized to make any other reports to the public that they consider appropriate at any time.

Finally, if this legislation is passed, a number of powers under section 86 of the Health Protection and

Promotion Act would be transferred from the Minister of Health to the chief medical officer of health. These powers deal specifically with the authority to take necessary action to protect the public in any health crisis or to appoint others to take that action. They are powers that until now have resided exclusively with the minister. Under this legislation, they would reside exclusively with the very best person suited to wield them: the chief medical officer of health.

The chief medical officer of health will also continue to serve as assistant deputy minister of health, enabling him or her to play a leadership role in setting public health policy as we continue to build our capacity to deal with threats both known and yet to be discovered.

This legislation also provides that, effective the day the act comes into force, the sitting chief medical officer of health will begin a five-year appointment.

Dr Basrur has amply demonstrated her qualifications to this Legislature and to the people of our great province. It is in everyone's best interests that she be allowed to continue with the excellent work she is doing, work that will be made much easier with the passage of this legislation.

I should note that our party promised during the election campaign that we would be doing this. We promised to give the chief medical officer of health real independence to protect public health. This legislation would do that. We promised to make the chief medical officer of health an independent officer rather than a government appointee. This appointment process would do that. We promised that the CMOH will report to Ontarians annually on the state of the public health system. This legislation does that by requiring an annual report from the chief medical officer of health, as well as making it clear that he or she is free to report to the public at any time he or she sees fit.

We made those promises and we're keeping them, because it's clear to us, as I believe it is clear to all Ontarians, that in the event of a health crisis their chief medical officer of health must be free of political concerns, free of interference, free to devote him- or herself completely to the critical job of safeguarding the health and safety of the people of this province. The Health Protection and Promotion Amendment Act would grant that freedom, and I urge its passage by colleagues on both sides of the House.

OMA AGREEMENT

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Statements by the ministry?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Here I go again, Mr Speaker.

I'm also delighted to rise today to talk about the tentative agreement we have reached with the Ontario Medical Association. This is a landmark agreement and it's one we're extremely proud of. This agreement is the achievement of government and physicians working together on a plan that will transform health care in the

province of Ontario. The OMA should be equally proud of what we've accomplished together. This deal is different from any agreements that have been negotiated with doctors in this province or in any other province. That is because this agreement fuels meaningful change in the delivery of health care, consistent with our transformation agenda. It will bring more doctors to communities across this province. It will compensate and reward doctors to practise in new ways. It will improve the ability to provide care to their patients.

As a result of this agreement, Ontario will be a much more attractive place to practise medicine. This agreement is, at its core, about bringing patients more access to the care they require. It will do this by compensating doctors to provide more comprehensive care and work as part of a team to deliver care 24/7 to people in their communities. That's because we believe that the best health care is the health care you find as close to home as possible.

This agreement will bring and keep more doctors in communities across this province instead of seeing them move out of town or south of the border. In 2000 we had 120 net new doctors migrating to Ontario from other provinces. In 2002 we had only two. Also under the Tories' watch, the number of underserved communities grew from 63 to a whopping 133 in the province of Ontario. This agreement will see more doctors in those communities and give people who have too long been deprived of essential medical care the opportunity to have their own doctor.

If doctors want to provide comprehensive care or if they choose to provide specialized care to seniors or to people with diabetes or with HIV, this agreement will give them more resources to deliver that kind of comprehensive care. If they want to work as part of a family health team or other primary care model providing around-the-clock care close to where people live, this agreement will provide more resources for them to do just that. This agreement will finally give life to the much-touted phrase "primary care reform."

Some doctors will choose to continue to practise in traditional fee-for-service models or in walk-in clinics. That will continue to be their choice, but this agreement rewards doctors who want to provide more care and operate in new models of care.

This agreement will help us achieve our strategy to bring wait times down in five key areas: hip and knee replacements, cardiac care, cancer care, cataracts, and MRI and CT scans. It will fund surgeons and specialists to increase volumes of procedures. Under this agreement we are not sending ophthalmologists home at 12 o'clock in the afternoon on Wednesdays any longer.

This agreement will take pressure off hospitals by assisting doctors to provide on-call service in long-term-care homes and in home care and in palliative care. This will result in more patients receiving care in their homes or in long-term care instead of queuing up at hospitals.

Perhaps the part of this agreement that I am most proud of: This agreement will incent doctors to keep peo-

ple from getting sick in the first place. This deal breaks new ground by funding and rewarding doctors for prevention and health promotion. It will provide incentives for helping people to stop smoking and for cancer screening. By keeping people well, we will realize major savings downstream.

1400

It will incent doctors to better manage patients' drug utilization so that patients receive only the medications they need and have more support to take them properly.

Not only does it fuel needed change; this agreement will save money for our health care system. With this agreement, we will be better able to fully cash in on the medicare advantage.

Here are a few specific examples of cost savings this agreement will yield:

It will encourage and support standardization in hospitals. What do I mean by that? It will assist hospitals and doctors to work together to use the same types of equipment and devices, such as hip and knee replacements, reducing the current patchwork of medical equipment. This will drive efficiency and cost savings throughout the hospital system, savings that can be invested back into better patient care.

Funding enhancements for ER doctors will reduce cost pressures on our hospitals. By keeping people out of hospitals who don't need to be there, by improving prevention and promoting healthy lifestyles, by enabling people to be diagnosed and treated earlier for diseases like diabetes—all of this will bring enormous savings to medicare.

This is the first deal in the history of Ontario that does not provide across-the-board increases. It puts the resources in place for doctors to practice in new ways that will bring higher levels of care to patients across this province.

Unlike the Tories, who preferred to pay more for more of the same, we are using this agreement to fuel our transformation efforts. That means more doctors in local communities, more surgeries to reduce wait times and a genuine focus on the health of Ontarians by getting doctors more involved in the wellness of their patients.

There is a lot of speculation about what this deal costs. Over the four-year term of this agreement, our government will invest in the range of \$800 million to \$1.077 billion more in fee increases. Fully 100% of the cost of this agreement will buy change in this province: change in the work lives and opportunities for doctors, change in the quality and accessibility of health care for 12 million Ontarians.

We're very proud of this agreement. It marks an important turning point for physicians in this province. It will bring a new strength and a renewed vitality to the profession of medicine in this province. Ontario doctors should be optimistic about this agreement and what it brings to the medical profession and the care they bring to patients each and every day. We're looking forward to standing side by side with them to see that this agreement becomes a reality.

Most importantly, this agreement will bring more care to Ontarians, who deserve to have a family doctor as close to home as possible. This will make for healthier Ontarians, and it will transform health care in the province of Ontario.

CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): I'll first respond to the minister's announcement about the new legislation he has introduced with respect to the independence of the chief medical officer of health.

The minister will recall that I had a long discussion with him and his chief medical officer of health last week in committee. Certainly the concept of greater independence for the chief medical officer of health is something we support on this side of the House. It was recommended by one of the commissions, by Judge Archie Campbell, and we certainly support the principle.

I want to thank the minister for providing a briefing ahead of time. That's something that used to take place in this House. It hadn't taken place a lot, so I want to publicly thank him for that.

I do take issue with the minister's decision to unceremoniously give the boot to the former chief medical officer of health, an outstanding public servant by the name of Dr Colin D'Cunha, who was tremendously well regarded by those of us who had the privilege to work with one of the most exceptional public servants in the employ of the government.

I did notice with great interest, though, that in his legislation this great, open, transparent process begins in five years, not right away. That's certainly something that I'm sure will be discussed in this House and in committee.

OMA AGREEMENT

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): I listened with great interest to the Minister of Health's comments with respect to the OMA deal. I thought it was the tradition in this province not to release these deals.

I recall the Premier saying just on Tuesday, not 48 hours ago, "There is a tradition in Ontario, when we negotiate these agreements with the medical community," that they are not made public. "We will respect it in our term." So the Premier has broken another promise. He said on Tuesday that he would respect the traditions of the previous government. So we can only hear the bugles of retreat. In the halls yesterday at 3:30, we could hear, "Beep, beep, beep." It was the trucks of the Liberal regime backing up.

I listened to this minister stand on his feet and say there was no reform in our health care system for many years, when he knows that is not the case. It was the former Conservative government, under exceptionally strong ministers like Jim Wilson, Elizabeth Witmer, Tony Clement and, briefly, Dave Johnson, who helped bring in nurse practitioners and make them a reality in

Ontario. It was Elizabeth Witmer, for example, who was the driving force behind the family health care networks and primary care reform. One would listen to this minister and he would think that every good idea for health care reform came from his pen, but that is not exactly the case. The previous government did lay the foundation.

I was reading the minister's remarks, the ones on which he did not offer briefings to the opposition, and I wondered why. It's because he does not want them to withstand scrutiny. I was particularly interested in his document on page 6, where he says, "Our government will invest \$1.077 billion more." But he talked about it as "fee increases." Well, the minister may very well be trying to get away with that sleight of hand, but right now as we speak, as we debate in this Legislature, Keith Leslie and Broadcast News are reporting that documents obtained by Broadcast News show that this bill will cost at least \$1.28 billion. That's a quarter of a billion dollars off in spending for physician services. I didn't believe the number in the minister's speech. Keith obviously doesn't accept it. Broadcast News is obviously exposing that it's substantially more. And I know that by the time we get to the bottom of this, we will discover that there will be more expenses. There will be other side deals that you have made to grease the skids to get this bill through. It suggests to me, Minister, that you're not always as proud of the side deals, of the agreements you've negotiated, the fact that we're not getting straightforward answers as to how much this deal will cost. If Broadcast News has more information than the minister is providing to this House, that would be a great affront to Parliament. We will be listening and looking with great interest to find out what goes on there.

I say to the member for Ottawa Centre that we're excited to have him back. We missed him when we were fighting for the Ottawa Hospital this morning when neither he nor any of the Ottawa members were prepared to speak on behalf of the Ottawa Hospital. Voters will take note of that, that they were not prepared to stand up for this community.

I say to the Minister of Health, he'd better confer with his Premier, because question period starts quickly and we will not tolerate not getting honest answers for the people of Ontario.

CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): It's my pleasure to respond to the first announcement that was made by the Minister of Health with respect to the legislative changes affecting the chief medical officer of health.

I want to start with a quote in the minister's release this morning that said: "In the event of a health crisis, Ontarians want to know that their chief medical officer of health is free of political concerns and interference. An independent CMOH will be able to put the health and safety of Ontarians first." Of course we all want that with respect to a public health crisis. Frankly, we want that every day with respect to important health issues that

Ontarians need to deal with—for example, clean water or inspection of restaurants.

The question I ask myself is, at the end of the day, after this legislation is passed, in perception and in reality can Ontarians be assured that the chief medical officer of health is independent? Regrettably, the answer is no. There are two reasons for that.

First of all, the reality is that even when this legislation is passed, the chief medical officer of health will remain an assistant deputy minister at the Ministry of Health, an assistant deputy minister who has accountability directly back to the Minister of Health, accountability with respect to what happens at the public health division. The second issue has to do with the fact that the annual report that will be tabled—the direct request is that the chief medical officer of health also has to essentially vet that annual report with the Minister of Health 30 days before it's tabled in this Legislature.

Let me deal with the first issue. The chief medical officer of health in Ontario's structure will still be an employee of the Ministry of Health, still accountable to the minister and still having responsibility to implement government policy. That presents a very clear situation where conflict can arise. There is the very real possibility of undermining the role of the chief medical officer of health because of that need to be accountable as an assistant deputy minister. I don't think anybody should be put in that position, regardless of who they are, but the legislation today doesn't change that, because that second role as a government employee is still maintained.

1410

I looked at the Manitoba example, and I advise the House of this. The chief medical officer of health is fundamentally different because the chief medical officer of health is not an employee of the ministry, is not responsible for implementing government policy, is responsible to work very directly and very hard with the public health office and does do that, and also has the responsibility to communicate directly with Manitobans with respect to important health issues.

I repeat: If both in perception and in reality we are going to have independence, then the chief medical officer of health should not also be an assistant deputy minister of health, regardless of who that individual is and regardless of their capabilities.

The second area with respect to independence is that I don't see why the chief medical officer of health has to submit her annual report to the minister 30 days prior to its tabling to be vetted. That's hardly independent. That creates an opportunity for something in that report to be changed, because it is supposed to be vetted 30 days before it's tabled. Again, if in perception and in reality we want to guarantee Ontarians that there is independence, the annual report should not have to be vetted by the minister 30 days before. It, like the other reports the chief medical officer of health can release publicly, should not be vetted by anyone. It should be released directly to this House and directly to the public.

OMA AGREEMENT

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I want to respond to the Minister of Health's statement on the OMA agreement. Let me say first of all that I checked, and this is really a recitation of what the Liberals said in their election platform. What we've seen since the election is that promise after promise after promise has been broken, so no one should be surprised at the speech about more promises.

The second thing that's noteworthy is that the minister says it's going to cost \$1.07 billion. That's what he said. He released that information about an hour ago. Broadcast News has one hour to check the figures and they find that he's already, in one hour, a quarter of a billion dollars out. So it sounds like this is a government that has been caught and is desperately trying to make up the numbers on the run.

I also want to note that this has been tried before. In 2000, the Conservatives said they were going to put \$250 million into primary care to entice doctors to do this, and one of the critics said, "Money alone isn't enough." Do you know who that was, Speaker? Dalton McGuinty. It's the same plan, the same strategy tried by the Conservatives, now tried again by Dalton McGuinty.

CHRIS SAUNDERS

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Before proceeding to oral questions, I would like to ask all members and guests to rise and join me in a moment of silence in honour of the memory of Navy Lieutenant Chris Saunders of HMCS Chicoutimi.

The House observed a moment's silence.

ORAL QUESTIONS

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leader of the Opposition): My question is to the Premier. Premier, in your health care platform from last year's election, you stated, "Ontario Liberals believe in a universal, publicly funded health care system that gives us all the care we need when we need it."

You are now redefining medicare in Ontario by forcing hospitals to decide what services to cut as you strong-arm them to balance their budgets at all costs while only giving them half of what our Conservative government gave them last year. Worse, you are forcing hospitals to sign interim agreements to receive their funding, which only protects a small number of services from cuts, in effect creating two classes of patients: those who are on the list to receive a protected service and those who are not.

Premier, you promised Ontarians that health care services would be provided to all when needed. Now you are fundamentally redefining health care in Ontario at the

expense of the very patients you promised to serve. How can you justify this broken promise?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): My colleague has it wrong again. What we are doing with hospitals is that, in addition to investing hundreds of millions more this year than was projected in the Magna budget, for example, we are also transforming health care. We simply cannot afford to allow hospital costs to increase at 10% a year. So in addition to giving an additional 4.3% to hospitals this year, and in addition to cleaning up the messes left behind by deficits incurred under the Tory government, we are also investing heavily in community-based care: close to half a billion dollars over the course of the next four years in home care, close to half a billion dollars over the course of the next four years in long-term care in our nursing homes, close to a quarter of a billion dollars in public health. We have a brand new vaccination program. We're going to vaccinate some two million children over the course of the next three years.

So in addition to ensuring that we are providing an adequate level of funding to our hospitals, we are also shifting some investments into the community, where the care is closer to home and less expensive.

Mr Runciman: Unfortunately for patients in our province, the Premier just confirmed their worst fears. Hospitals have been given half of the increase that our Conservative government transferred to hospitals last year. At the same time, the interim agreements you are forcing hospitals to sign protect limited services, as you force hospitals to balance their budgets at all costs. For example, you are not protecting emergency room services, chemotherapy clinics, day surgeries, diabetes clinics, obstetrical services, or arthritis clinics. That is just to name a few. You are creating two classes of patients: those who are on the list to receive a protected service and the much larger list of those who are not.

We are used to broken Liberal promises, but this one affects people's health. Explain to patients why you are breaking your solemn promise to protect universal medicare for all patients when they need care. Explain that.

Hon Mr McGuinty: This is more than passing strange, that the party that champions private health care in Ontario, the party that voted against our legislation, the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act, the party that did not want to put us in a position where the Minister of Health was just a few weeks ago to stamp out an incursion on the part of the American private health care syndicate—it's now interesting to hear him stand up in his place and champion public health care for Ontarians.

I think the people of Ontario know in their heart of hearts where we stand when it comes to supporting public health care in Ontario, and I think they know equally well where that party stands when it comes to supporting private health care.

Mr Runciman: There's another secret Liberal agenda at play here. This is effectively backdoor delisting. With

these agreements that you are forcing hospitals to sign, you are creating two classes of patients. You are providing half funding to hospitals and protecting a very small list of services from cuts. You and your pit bull minister are boasting about your deal with doctors, but a fee increase is meaningless if their ability to provide care is lost because operating rooms are closing and beds are being eliminated.

Premier, please explain how citizens in Ontario will receive the services they need when hospitals are being forced by your gun-to-the-head funding cuts to reduce these services. Explain that.

Hon Mr McGuinty: Again the member has it wrong. We are spending \$700 million more than they were going to spend under their Magna budget. Just so we are clear, that government cut \$565 million to hospital budgets on their watch, and they closed 28 hospitals—just so we're clear as to what the real facts are in this matter. We understand that as a province—

Interjections.

1420

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order. I'm just giving time for the member from Simcoe-Grey to come to order.

Premier?

Hon Mr McGuinty: Apparently I touched a raw nerve over there. I will refrain from doing that in the course of our term, Speaker.

We understand that we've got some challenges. Ontarians understand that our health care costs are a real issue for us. We are moving forward in a responsible and progressive way. We're putting much more money into hospitals than our counterparts did—\$700 million more, in fact. But beyond that, we are prepared to sit down and work with our hospitals to make sure that we get this right, and we're doing much to relieve the pressure on them by investing in more community-based care.

OMA AGREEMENT

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): My question is to the Minister of Health. All of us sat here with stunned amusement at your announcement, where you gave a very specific number on how much your agreement with the OMA cost. What you are talking about is \$1.07 billion. Broadcast News is reporting that this deal, the deal that you signed—and they have documents backing it up—is costing \$1.28 billion. Minister, I want you to stand in your place and give us a categorical answer: Who are we to believe—you or Broadcast News?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I will, in the spirit of charity, do my best to refrain from picking up on the first word the member used. I want to say that the agreement we've signed with the Ontario Medical Association is a landmark agreement for patients in Ontario. It calls on change in the way that we deliver health care in this province by offering strong encouragement to doctors to practise care in a fashion that is consistent with what Romanow sug-

gested and what people need. That's about driving care to local communities. That is the offer; that is what is on offer to Ontario doctors. Of course there's a range with respect to these costs, as I mentioned in my remarks, because it's on offer. No one is being forced to do it. It's a model that is incenting this change in the nature of practice.

The figures that are being raised by the honourable member with respect to a media report—I haven't had the advantage of seeing that. The figure we have offered, \$1.077, at the top end of the range, relates to the compensation that the government of Ontario would pay to Ontario's doctors if they took advantage and provided patients with the advantage of new models of practice.

Mr Baird: I say to the minister very directly, the numbers he gave in this House just a few short minutes ago did not speak to a range. Page 6 of his announcement said that the government will invest \$1.077 billion and that 100% of the costs is covered in the agreement. If these figures are true, if your figures are to be believed, that's an 18% salary increase, on average. If the Broadcast News numbers are true, it is a 24% average increase for physicians in Ontario. This morning, you used your majority to bully the opposition's attempt to get a 6% increase for the Ottawa Hospital. How can you possibly sign an agreement that gives the average physician a 24% increase in their salary when hospitals like the Ottawa Hospital, who have cut to the bone, are denied an even 6% matching and are being forced to live on less than a 2% increase? Would you do that, Minister?

Hon Mr Smitherman: I can see the honourable member struggling to dummy this issue down to the point where he can work around just a couple of numbers. He used the word "average" in his question, which demonstrates a fundamental lack of awareness of what is on offer to Ontario's doctors. This is not about—

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): Table it.

Hon Mr Smitherman: Obviously, the member from Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford wasn't around yesterday to get his copy of a document that is in the public domain.

The point is this: There is no payment available to Ontario doctors unless the nature of their practice delivers on what is on offer. In other words, the member uses the word "average"; there is no average in this agreement. This is not an across-the-board agreement. This is not about money for money's sake. This is about making an offer to Ontario doctors that says, "Work with us. Work with your patients. Adopt practice models which everybody says are the best way to treat patients in our province, and accordingly there are compensation opportunities." Consistent with that is that for specialists and those people providing surgeries related to our wait time strategies, there are incentives to be able to move forward and deliver more of these services. There is no average. This is not across the board. This is a landmark—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Thank you. Final supplementary?

Mr Baird: Minister, just like your hospital budget increase is an average, it's not across the board, the Ottawa Hospital is only receiving a 1.8% budget increase. Tomorrow is a frightening day for people in my community. That hospital is going to be forced to submit a proposal to your ministry—

Laughter.

Mr Baird: This isn't funny. I say to the members opposite, right now at the Ottawa Hospital they're having to put the final touches on a plan to fire nurses and increase patient waiting times, and all this government can do, including the Premier, is laugh at that serious situation. It's an absolute disgrace that they couldn't show up for the vote and be counted and stand up for our hospitals. I say to the Minister of Health, how can you possibly justify giving physicians a 24% increase, on average, when hospitals like the Ottawa Hospital will be required to lay off nurses and increase waiting times because of your stingy 1.8% increase? Would you tell us that, Minister?

Hon Mr Smitherman: With respect to the agreement we've signed with the Ontario Medical Association, it is an agreement that makes a significant change in three fundamental areas. It reverses a trend that was established by that party while in government, and was ignored by that party, which saw us move, under their watch, from 60 to 133 underserved communities in this province from the standpoint of the provision of physician services.

This agreement will draw doctors back to practise in Ontario. This agreement addresses our wait time challenges by providing resources so that we can provide more procedures. The real issue is the cost savings associated with this, because we're taking resources upstream and encouraging our doctors to be involved in assisting patients to stay well in the first place, to help people like our seniors in long-term-care facilities, to get our province and Ontarians to be better and healthier and to promote an agenda of wellness consistent with all of the best reports.

The Speaker: New question? The leader of the third party.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. You have a credibility problem when it comes to health care. Before the election, you said you would never impose a health premium because it is regressive and unfair for working families. Immediately after the election, you impose a health premium that goes after working families with a vengeance. Before the election, you said you would never cut health services. Immediately after the election, you cut health services for chiropractors, physiotherapists and optometrists. And now today at 12 noon you float a story that your deal with the doctors will cost \$1.07 billion, but Broadcast News has an opportunity to check the figures and it comes out to be \$1.28 billion. You're out by \$250 million in one hour. Premier, why should anyone believe you when it's obvious you're just trying to spin another story to cover your tracks?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs): I'm not sure where the new research dollars are going. Maybe they're all going into postage or something; I don't know.

As the Minister of Health just explained, the figure that has been provided, and again in this Legislature, has to do with the amount of compensation that has been dedicated to physicians. That's what it's all about. But it's important for Ontarians to know what they are getting for this new investment in compensation to the doctors. They're going to get better care when it comes to HIV care, palliative care, oncology, care of the elderly. We're going to provide funding premiums—we think this is only fair—for after hours and on holidays. It turns out that people still get sick on Christmas Day, and it's harder to get a doctor on Christmas Day. We think it's fair that we make sure there's more money available for that kind of thing.

I will be delighted to share more of the benefits for Ontarians in the supplementaries.

1430

Mr Hampton: The people of Ontario have heard all that from you before. In fact, a month ago they heard you say that having a national pharmacare program that would cover everybody was the most important priority. Now they find in this health deal that the disabled, the poorest Ontario citizens and the elderly are going to lose \$200 million of drug benefits so you can bonus doctors \$50 million. One month pharmacare is the ultimate priority, and the next month the disabled, the poor and the frail elderly are being told, "We're going to claw back \$200 million."

There was nothing answered in the statement today—nothing answered—when somebody does an immediate fact check and finds you are out by \$250 million. So what I'm asking is this: Since your government historically promises and then breaks the promise, will you release the year-by-year details of the costing of this agreement so Ontario citizens can judge for themselves whether or not you are being factual in your announcement today?

Hon Mr McGuinty: Just for purposes of the record, because I think that happens to hold some weight at least, this is a government, the NDP government, that froze drug benefits. We have, in our first year, increased it by a quarter of a billion dollars. That's just so we'll know what we're talking about.

The leader of the third party made reference to seniors and their concerns. I can tell you that as part of this new, revolutionary package we have with Ontario's doctors—and we're hopeful they will see it for what it is: a truly important, progressive departure—we're going to provide doctors with new premiums on payments for patients when you turn 65. It turns out that when you get older, your conditions become a bit more complex and it takes a bit more time for the doctor to deal with you. If you're going to deal with someone who's 65, we're going to pay you a bit more to do that. We're going to provide them as well with more money so they can take

greater responsibility for chronic disease management, which the Minister of Health tells me is a huge cost driver, particularly in the areas of chronic heart disease and diabetes. That's something we're not adequately funding our doctors for.

Those are just a couple of things, and I'll be delighted to share more with the member in his final supplementary. But the purpose of this deal is to ensure that we are providing better-quality care, in a more affordable way, to the people of Ontario.

Mr Hampton: The people of Ontario have heard all this before. They heard it before in an election campaign and then, after the election campaign, they saw you break virtually every promise you made. Need I remind you again? "Dalton McGuinty won't cut health services." Then you cut optometrists, then you cut physiotherapists, chiropractors. "Dalton McGuinty won't impose an unfair and regressive health tax." Then you did just that.

Premier, here is the issue. You have a history of promising everything under the sun and then failing to deliver. What the people of Ontario want to know is, what is this going to cost? That's what we continue to ask. Since you're already out on your numbers today, release the year-by-year. You haven't denied that some family physicians will get a 36% pay increase. Before people are faced with more nasty surprises from your government, more cuts to health care, will you release the year-by-year projections so people can see what this is going to cost and how it's going to be paid for? Will you do that, Premier?

Hon Mr McGuinty: The cost of this new deal—assuming it's accepted by doctors, and we're hopeful they will do that—is \$1.077 billion over the course of four years. But something of interest that I know Ontarians would be anxious to learn about is that in the first year, this deal provides for no increase. We've made doctors understand something of the nature of our fiscal challenge and we're pleased that they're looking at accommodating taxpayers' concerns in that regard.

Beyond that, by way of new benefits for Ontarians, which is what this new arrangement is all about, we're going to increase existing fees for home care visits. We're providing increases for palliative care. We're going to introduce something that is brand new: a telephone management fee. Families know that when you've got somebody sick and at home, who is dying, it is really important that from time to time you have access to a doctor, who may not be able to come in to see you but who can give you advice over the phone on pain management and the like. That's something that's brand new.

Something else that's brand new is a long-term-care monthly management fee so that a doctor can have a simple fee on a monthly basis. You've got to drop in at least twice on a nursing home and see your patient.

These are all designed to relieve pressures on our hospitals and provide better care closer to the community.

The Speaker: New question?

Mr Hampton: To the Premier: Premier, you say now that in year 1 there will be no fee increase for physicians.

I guess what this means is that for some physicians it will be a 36% pay increase over only three years.

So I'm asking you, instead of doing this desperate striptease where you're forced to disclose the numbers, will you disclose the numbers now?

I'll tell you what people are afraid of. What people are afraid of is that after the agreement is put away, they'll suddenly find that a whole long list of other health care services are being cut because of your deal—exactly what has happened with the seniors, the disabled and the elderly in terms of pharmacare; exactly what happened with respect to chiropractic services, physiotherapy services and optometrist services.

People need to know: How much is this going to cost, what are the year-by-year costs, and what other cuts are going to be made to pay for it? This is the people's health care system. It's not yours and George Smitherman's to play around with in the back room. Will you release the year-by-year estimates of the documents so people can judge for themselves whether this is a good deal or not?

Hon Mr McGuinty: Again we hear from the defender of the status quo when it comes to medicare in Ontario. I can tell you, we don't accept what it is that we have right now by way of health care services for the people of Ontario. We're not prepared to say that there's nothing that can be done, that we cannot alter the behaviour of doctors, that we cannot transform the kind of services we deliver to the community, that we cannot better control our costs in hospitals. We're not prepared to accept that.

What we are doing through this agreement—and I remain very hopeful that Ontario doctors will support it—is bringing better-quality care closer to the community in a way that is more affordable and more accessible to the people of Ontario.

Mr Hampton: Let me tell the Premier, I'm not going to take lectures from somebody who in their first six months imposes a regressive and unfair health tax which hurts modest- and middle-income families the most; from the Premier who said before the election, "I, Dalton McGuinty, won't cut health services," and then chopped optometrists, physiotherapists and chiropractors and says it should be good for people; who says one month that having a national pharmacare plan is the priority of the century, and then we find out a month later wants to take \$200 million in benefits from the elderly, the poor and the disabled. That's your track record, Premier. That's why you've got a credibility problem, and that's why, before people swallow any more of your promises, you should release the details of the deal.

You say, "No fee increase in the first year." What about year 2, what about year 3, what about year 4? Why are you already out \$250 million, and what other health services are going to be cut to pay for this so-called secret deal you've got with the doctors?

Hon Mr McGuinty: Secret deal? It's now out in the public domain. It was talked about on TV. We released a copy of the agreement itself. We're not going to do the calculations for the member opposite. You have the darned agreement. Do your own calculations.

I'll tell you what hurts families. What hurts families is not having a physician. This agreement is about making the practice of family medicine more attractive in Ontario.

During the last year of that government we had two net new doctors in the province of Ontario. That may not be of concern to this member. It may not be of concern to him that the number of family doctors in northern Ontario in particular is dwindling. This deal is all about ensuring that we're providing premiums to doctors to work in northern Ontario, in rural and remote communities. It's about bringing care closer to people in Ontario communities throughout the province. It's making it more accessible, more affordable. It is progressive. It is a departure from the status quo. I do not defend the status quo. I'll leave that to the NDP.

1440

Mr Hampton: Here is the issue. What we've seen already is that your government is quite prepared to cut health services that people need. We've seen that already. We've seen already that you're prepared to go after the poor, the disabled and the frail elderly in order to bonus physicians \$50 million in this agreement. So what people are saying, and they're saying it across this province, is that this is their health care system, not yours. They've heard you deliver promises before and they've watched you break those promises virtually the next week. People deserve to know: What are the details? How much are physicians going to be paid? How much is it going to be increased? What are the deliverables? What will the penalties be if these so-called deliverables don't happen? That's what people deserve to see; that's what they want to see. Will you release that information so the people of Ontario can judge for themselves whether or not your government is doing the right thing?

Hon Mr McGuinty: Some of this, frankly, is just a little hard to stomach. The accusation that somehow this government stands against and works against the interests of our poor, our frail and our elderly is nothing short of nonsense, and he knows it. I want to remind the member opposite about what we've done with respect to welfare rates, with respect to the rates for people who find themselves on disability, about the new rent bank we've established, about bringing back the nutrition allowance for expectant mothers; I want to remind him that we put \$406 million into long-term-care facilities this year to look after Ontario's frail and elderly—just so we're clear with respect to who is doing what for Ontario's poor, frail and elderly.

I come back to this deal. This deal represents a dramatic departure from the status quo. We're not prepared to accept the record of failure left to us, bequeathed to us, by the two previous governments. We're working with our doctors to demonstrate to them that we can work together, that we can improve the quality of primary care, that we can bring care close to the families, closer to the communities, and that we can do that in an affordable and sustainable way.

YORK CENTRAL HOSPITAL

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): My question is to the Minister of Health. Minister, the finance minister, who is also the member for Vaughan-King-Aurora, and the member for Thornhill will be very interested in your response to this question. Minister, I received a letter from Dr Watson, who is an orthopaedic surgeon at the York Central Hospital. He says, "Ten months have now passed since that announcement"—he's making reference to the announcement for a major needed expansion at York Central Hospital—"yet York Central Hospital remains at a standstill." He goes on to say, "...what really is going on here and why has YCH been blackballed...."

My question to you is exactly that: Why has York Central Hospital not heard from you with regard to an approval for such an important expansion? I know the Minister of Finance and the member for Thornhill must have been speaking to you about this as well. Can you tell this House why we have not heard from you with regard to an absolutely important expansion for this hospital while waiting lists continue to line up, while we have tremendous pressures and while a crisis is developing at York Central Hospital? Why have you not come forward with this project?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): The member raises an excellent question, because York Central stands with a very, very long list of hospitals in the province of Ontario that had promises made by the previous government that were unfulfilled financially. One of the realities—

Interjections.

Hon Mr Smitherman: There is absolutely no doubt that that exceptional hospital in Richmond Hill, in an area of our province which has seen a lot of growth, is under pressure. Nobody would doubt that. But the reality we face is that, on a long list of hospitals that were announced with no funding associated, there are also of course, once built, significant operational obligations.

York Central is not unique in the province. There is a significant number of hospitals—others were referenced in members' statements today—that are awaiting similar news. My ministry is working very hard with the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, and I send this message to the people of York region: The local MPPs are advocating very effectively on their behalf, and we expect to be in a position to make announcements shortly.

Interjection.

Mr Klees: Speaker, the Minister of Finance makes light of this, because he said, "You know, you made a presentation on this," and—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order. Minister of Finance. OK. That's enough.

Mr Klees: As I said before, the Minister of Finance makes light of this by saying that the cheque bounced. The approval that was gone through the entire process was about a two-and-a-half-year period of time. This project was a priority for the Ministry of Health. It was

approved. This Minister of Finance approved some \$4 billion of new spending on programs right across this province and didn't have the courage to stand up for a hospital that is serving his constituents as a priority.

Minister of Health, did this finance minister ever speak to you about the importance of this project and ask you to fund it? Did he or did he not?

Hon Mr Smitherman: I think if the honourable member reads back my first answer, he'll see that I acknowledge that York Central is a priority project, but—

Mr Klees: Where's the money?

Hon Mr Smitherman: That is a very interesting question. The member asks—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I'm sure if a question is asked, one would like to hear a response.

Interjections.

The Speaker: The member from Oak Ridges. I'm not quite sure if you want a response. If you would just allow the minister to respond, then he will. Minister.

Hon Mr Smitherman: Eight and a half years in government and that member asks, "Where's the money?" What I'm sure the people of York region are asking is, "Where was the money to back up the fake cheque that the honourable member presented?"

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

Interjections.

Mr Klees: On a point of order, Mr Speaker.

Interjections.

The Speaker: I have to get order first before I can entertain a point of order.

Mr Klees: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The reality is that the people of York region know precisely what—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

Interjections.

The Speaker: The member from Oak Ridges. I may have to warn this member, and I'm warning the member now, because you're not allowing the question period to proceed and other members are being denied their questions.

HEPATITIS C

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. Premier, in the past two days we've shown how your government has misused dedicated federal health dollars intended to help the victims of tainted blood. We've shown that you took that money, which was intended to provide enhanced services for those unfortunate victims of hepatitis C, and your government pocketed that money in general revenues.

So far, your response to these unfortunate victims has been, "Well, the agreement lets us get away with it." Yesterday, the federal government, the federal health minister, was forced to admit that his government has

done something wrong, was forced to admit that they've let the victims of hepatitis C down. My question to you, Premier, is this: Will you now admit that by pocketing this money that was intended to provide enhanced health services, you've let these victims of hepatitis C down as well?

1450

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs): To the Minister of Health.

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Of course we all follow with interest the ongoing trail of misguided information that the honourable member is advancing. Two days ago in the House he suggested that the province of Manitoba had a more comprehensive program for people with hepatitis C than the province of Ontario. This is not factually correct. In point of fact, the province of Ontario, on the issue of cash payment to people from the pre-1986 and post-1990 victims' pool, has a 250% larger cash payment.

Yesterday we saw, obviously in Ottawa, that the federal minister is taking a review of this from the standpoint of the federal government. Tomorrow in Vancouver, as I mentioned to the honourable member earlier in the week, I'll have the opportunity to be with the federal minister and other health ministers.

What I've said is that we've taken a step as a government to ask John Plater to work with us to help to enhance the quality of our strategic plan related to hepatitis C. The bottom line remains this: Ontario will ensure that the highest possible standard of care is provided for people in our province with hepatitis C.

Mr Hampton: The admission by the federal government that they had let the victims of hepatitis C down I thought was a magnanimous gesture. But what's clear is that the McGuinty government, which has taken money intended for these unfortunate victims and pocketed this money—you're not prepared to make the same kind of courageous admission.

Let me tell you about one of the sufferers you've taken money from. Susan Unelli suffers from cirrhosis of the liver and autoimmune disease caused by hepatitis C. She has lost her house because she couldn't afford to pay for the treatments she needs. Now she's too weak to clean up her new apartment and too poor to hire someone else. Yesterday, the federal government admitted that they let Susan down. They said she should have received the enhanced health care services. You pocketed that money, your government pocketed that money. Are you prepared to admit now that you let Susan down and are you prepared to say that you're going to pay her some compensation for those out-of-pocket health care expenses that have obviously cost her so dearly?

Hon Mr Smitherman: Of course nobody wants to be in a situation where we have word that people struggling with serious chronic illness in our province are living in difficult conditions. But the honourable member seeks to personalize this in a fashion that I think is rather distasteful.

The fact of the matter is that the legal agreement related to these funds—and perhaps this is what the

federal government has now gotten on to—was very, very clear. It says that the funds are to be provided to provinces for the purposes of the operation of their health care systems. In the province of Ontario, the tradition continues, and it's very clear: We have an obligation and we seek every day to fulfill it the best we can, and that is to provide good-quality services, the best in Canada, for people with hepatitis C. We've asked John Plater, a distinguished man, a real leader in the hepatitis C community, to work with us to make sure that the strategic plan we have for dealing with hepatitis C is the best plan in the country. That's the work we're doing as a government, and we're doing that hand in hand with the affected people.

VIDEO GAMES

Ms Laurel C. Broten (Etobicoke-Lakeshore): My question is for the Minister of Consumer and Business Services. The growing availability of violent and adult-oriented video games is a real concern to many parents in Etobicoke-Lakeshore and right across our province. I understand that the government has partnered with the retail and video game industries to ensure that Ontario children are protected from inappropriate material. How will this initiative help parents ensure that their children are playing games that are appropriate for their age?

Hon Jim Watson (Minister of Consumer and Business Services): I want to thank the member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore for her question. I did indeed have the pleasure of participating in an event this morning with the Retail Council of Canada and the Entertainment Software Rating Board.

Our government has developed a very positive relationship with the retail community. Commitment to Parents is a program that will see internationally recognized ratings standards on all video games for sale or rent in the province of Ontario, and retailers will not sell inappropriate videos to underage children.

The Retail Council of Canada is to be commended for this work. They recognize that their merchants have a responsibility to ensure that parents are well informed of the content of various videos.

I thank the retail council and I thank the ratings board. This is a great example of a partnership where government and industry are working together to protect children and to inform parents.

Ms Broten: Indeed, that's an important step forward for parents and consumers to ensure a safer marketplace for Ontario's children. But how does this strategy fit within government initiatives around video games in an effort to modernize and clarify our video game classifications in this province?

Hon Mr Watson: I thank the honourable member for the supplementary. Obviously, we have to work in collaboration with the industry, business and government. Bill 70, which was my first piece of legislation that I introduced in April of this year, would enable the Ontario government to adopt and enforce compliance with the current Entertainment Software Rating Board. Any

retailer who sells or rents an adult-oriented video game to children would be committing an offence that would be punishable by law. Through Bill 70, Ontario is taking a leading role in both educating parents and protecting children. I urge the opposition to support Bill 70 for all of these reasons.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington): My question is to the Premier, in the absence of the Minister of Community and Social Services today, and it has to do with certain details within the OMA agreement.

Before the election, you promised that you would be improving access to the Ontario drug benefit plan by \$400 million over four years—statistics provided by your own ministry. Yet after the election you have orchestrated a new private deal with the OMA that will result in \$400 million in exact cuts over four years, with a referred benefit of \$50 million that some doctors are calling a bribe.

According to statistics from the Ministry of Community and Social Services, your target reduction for medication benefits for the most marginalized citizens in our province—the poor, pregnant women on social assistance, the disabled—is \$80 million. It's hard to see this as good health policy.

Premier, my question: Can you show me what health study was so convincing to you and to your ministers that women and children on social assistance are consuming more medications than women and children who aren't on welfare in this province, and that's why you're taking this invasive action to reduce their health benefits?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I'm delighted to report that we relied in part on the very capable advice received by us from one Cam Jackson, who said on June 1, 2004, "Ontario's seniors are the most overmedicated people on the face of the Earth. The average senior in this province is taking 12 to 16 drugs every single day of their lives. We're spending \$2 billion outside of hospitals on medication. This is an incredible issue. I wish that our government had started, and I hope that some government will start, providing prescribing guidelines to ... protect seniors in this province."

Well, that is exactly what we're doing.

Mr Jackson: Premier, there is no debate about the overmedication of Ontario seniors. While there are studies dealing with seniors, there are no known studies for you to target pregnant women on social assistance, and that's what you're doing with this policy.

1500

You said this is a historic departure. It is a historic departure, because for the first time in Ontario's history you are asking doctors to divide their patients by certain classes according to their income in order to reduce the amount of drugs. It's \$80 million, I tell the Treasurer, using your figures. You are going to ask doctors to prescribe fewer medications to the poor and the disabled in this province, and you are going to boost their income

by \$50 million. Why would you use the disabled and the poor as pawns in your negotiations with the OMA and create two-tier prescription access for the poor and the disabled for the first time in our province's history?

Hon Mr McGuinty: I am not sure if I've ever heard a grosser misrepresentation of what we are doing on this side of the House. What we are doing is finding the best way to spend the limited dollars that we have to ensure that we give the best possible health care to the people of Ontario. That's exactly what we are doing. To hear from this johnny-come-lately champion of the poor and the desolate and the frail and the elderly—where was he when this government cancelled the nutrition allowance for expectant mothers who found themselves on welfare in the province of Ontario? That is one thing that we have set aside.

The other thing we are doing is we put more than a quarter of a billion dollars into drugs this year alone to help all Ontarians of all ages in all income groups, and we will continue to move forward in that direction.

LABOUR DISPUTE

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): To the Minister of Children's Services: Minister, six months ago 145 correctional officers, social workers, psychologists, kitchen and maintenance staff at Syl Apps Youth Centre had to go on strike over health and safety issues. These workers have been out for six months now on their picket lines. The management at Syl Apps clearly wants to prolong this strike because it has an agenda of layoffs and massive cutbacks. These workers are here today because you're aiding their employer in achieving that goal.

On June 23 of this year, you wrote to these workers promising that this private company wouldn't be able to pocket the profits and prolong the strike. You said, "Whatever monies are saved now as a result of this disruption will be applied to the new contract." But these workers tell us that you're spending more than \$600 a day to keep an offender in Syl Apps—more than three times what you were spending before the strike.

Why is your ministry financing this private operator's blatant attempt at union busting, and why is a nearly empty facility receiving any money at all?

Hon Marie Bountrogianni (Minister of Children and Youth Services, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): First of all, the honourable member knows I can't comment on an ongoing negotiation. We believe in the collective bargaining process, and we wish both sides to get back to the table soon.

Having said that, I can tell you generally what my ministry does under these circumstances. First and foremost, we ensure the safety of the youth at these centres. The youth are safe; many of them have been removed. There are some youth there. They are monitored carefully by the ministry as well as by the child advocate. We have also reduced the monies to the appropriate level of youth in the facility.

Mr Kormos: Minister, you're spending \$600 a day to keep a young offender in that facility, three times what you were spending before the strike.

Look, these same workers have given you evidence that suggests there may be some serious accounting problems, accounting of government funds by Syl Apps. Financial statements show that they received \$12.5 million, but Syl Apps management claims to have received only \$10.3 million. This is a privately owned facility funded by public dollars. Some \$12.5 million is what your ministry's figures indicate they received; \$10.3 million is what they say they got. Why aren't you initiating an independent audit to ensure that there are no improprieties and to satisfy yourself, us and the public that there are no inappropriate savings and profiteering by the private operators of Syl Apps?

Hon Mrs Bountrogianni: I won't comment on the specific case but just tell you that in situations like this, all of the concerns brought forward to my ministry are addressed. We have, in the case of Syl Apps, gone in many times, as well as the child advocate going in, and we are reassured that there aren't any concerns outstanding.

HYDRO GENERATION

Mr Shafiq Qaadri (Etobicoke North): On behalf of the people of Ontario, I ask this question of the Minister of Finance, the Honourable Greg Sorbara. Minister, the McGuinty government is in the midst of turning around our energy infrastructure and generation capacity after years of sorry and sordid neglect. I understand the government is encouraging the development of alternate sources, including clean wind generation through the tax system. Could the minister inform the House about these initiatives?

Hon Greg Sorbara (Minister of Finance): Might I just say parenthetically on wind generation how pleased the government was with the overwhelming response to the request for proposals that my colleague the Minister of Energy put out. Wind generation is going to become an important part of our overall energy system in Ontario. There's no doubt about that.

The way in which the Ministry of Finance helps, and what we have done, is to create a fixed assessment rate, a land assessment rate for land used for wind generation. That allows generators to work with a somewhat lower tax base than what the land might carry for any other use. This will inspire new wind generation and provide an economic environment where proponents are able to go forward with their proposals. I'll await the member's supplementary.

Mr Qaadri: As with any structural change, there is always an adjustment challenge. Could you inform the House now how the government is responding to the concerns of municipalities about this particular tax structure initiative?

Hon Mr Sorbara: That's the other important part of the equation. The previous administration—I'm not going to completely trash the road they were going

down—was going to completely exempt lands used for wind generation. An interesting proposal, but it denies municipalities the revenues they need from their tax base. We're working with municipalities to make sure this level of fixed assessment is both low enough to encourage the wind generation we need, on the one hand, and to provide municipalities with a stable tax base, on the other. I think we're pretty much there, and I really appreciate the member raising the issue.

CANCER TREATMENT

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): A question to the Minister of Health concerning his management of the health care system: Niagara's residents are older, sicker and poorer compared to the rest of Ontario. Cancer mortality rates in Niagara are about 14% higher than the provincial average. As the minister knows, Niagara has been slated to receive a three-bunker cancer centre. Without this cancer centre, 1,000 patients a year will need to continue making the long trek to Hamilton or the even longer journey, all the way to Toronto. In the past few weeks, officials at the Niagara Health System have been told that those spaces are on hold and that the Ministry of Health and Cancer Care Ontario are revisiting this project and are considering moving Niagara's cancer care centre to Hamilton. Is this truly the minister's plan? Is he going to move Niagara services to the city of Hamilton?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I found it interesting that the honourable member started by questioning my management of the health care system. I would have thought he would appreciate that I was the guy—after all the verbiage and rhetoric that he used—who actually delivered the cash for the land ambulance in Niagara.

On the issue related to future development of our cancer treatment facilities, we depend on the advice of Cancer Care Ontario. The ministry has certainly been very dependent on their expertise in this matter. It takes into consideration, of course, not only the needs of localized communities, but our capacity to properly support any capital project with the people inside it who actually do the work. This is Cancer Care Ontario's role. It was a role that was established by your government and it has seen no change under our government. Whatever work they might be doing, we're looking forward to receiving it.

I will say on the issue that I've had the opportunity to be in contact with many municipal officials and my parliamentary colleagues from Niagara with respect to the issues of hospital development in Niagara. We're working very hard on these issues, and I think the honourable member would be the first to admit that when you want to look at management of the health care system in Niagara, in eight and a half years you guys did a pretty lousy job.

1510

Mr Hudak: Families of cancer patients in Niagara are going to find no comfort whatsoever in that minister's

political rhetoric. They know these three things: They know you're taking \$1,000 a year out of the pockets of Niagara's working families, they know the cancer treatment centre in Niagara is a needed and valuable service, and they know when a minister is using weasel words to avoid making the right decision when it comes to cancer care in the Niagara Peninsula. You're the minister. I know it's also an issue for my colleagues from Simcoe, with the Royal Vic. You, sir, make the calls. Come clean today. Stand in your place and tell the people of Niagara that you're not taking their long-awaited cancer centre and moving it up the QEW to Hamilton. Stand in your place and say you're committed to the Niagara cancer centre.

Hon Mr Smitherman: He's nearly as good at this as the other member, from Oak Ridges.

Long-awaited? The member himself, I believe a former parliamentary assistant to a Minister of Health, used the phrase "long-awaited." I suspect that's exactly what the people of Niagara are feeling, because on this issue, like so many others across the province, they trotted out their fake cheques and they made their announcements, but when we arrived, the cupboard was not just bare but overspent.

The issue, with respect, is this: Cancer Care Ontario continues to provide the government of Ontario and the Ministry of Health with their best-informed advice with respect to the location and need for future cancer treatment facilities in the province of Ontario. If they have made any decision to reconsider this, to look at this or to review it, they have done it of their own accord. As always, I look forward to the advice that Cancer Care Ontario provides, because that's the role that was created for them by your government.

STEEL INDUSTRY

Ms Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): My question is to the Premier, in the absence of the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. Today we learned from steel industry sources that Stelco is at threat of being taken over by OAO Severstal, Russia's largest steelmaker, in fact perhaps the largest steelmaker in the world.

The people in my riding of Hamilton East are extremely worried about the impact this may have on our employees in the city of Hamilton. They're worried about their jobs. They're worried about their pensions. They're worried about the very future of our community.

Your government has been completely invisible since Stelco went into bankruptcy nine months ago. Can you tell me what concrete steps your government is taking to protect the interests of Hamilton and its steelworkers? What role are you playing in these talks of a foreign takeover as my community stares down the threat of massive job losses every day?

Hon Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I know this is an issue of tremendous concern to the people of Hamilton and the

surrounding community. The member opposite knows that Stelco is operating with creditor protection at this time under the CCAA, and talks with the parties are ongoing. It's premature to discuss any particular details.

I would say that I was on an open-line radio show in Hamilton. It is really important that the parties come together and talk about this in an earnest and honest fashion. I'm concerned that that dialogue has not been continuing to this point in time.

We have a representative, James Arnett, who's been following it very closely. We understand the nature of the challenge and what has been happening to the steel industry throughout North America. We remain hopeful, but we are placing at this time, frankly, a very heavy weight on the shoulders of the parties involved, that they pursue a constructive and positive dialogue.

Ms Horwath: Thank you, Mr Premier, but you're just not quite getting it. Stelco is in bankruptcy for nine months now, and the people of Hamilton quite frankly feel betrayed by your government. They feel the provincial government has gone completely AWOL on them. They feel that the provincial government should actively be at the table, doing whatever is necessary to ensure that the jobs are preserved and that pensions are protected. But that's not what's happening. You are nowhere to be seen in this discussion.

I'll ask you once again: What role is your government taking in the foreign takeover of one of the province's most important industrial concerns and the potential loss of jobs in Hamilton, which, by the way, is in Ontario?

Hon Mr McGuinty: Obviously, I simply do not accept the member's categorization or her representation of how the people of Hamilton view this particular issue. It is serious. It is something that demands that the parties involved in particular set aside their differences wherever possible and work together in a positive, thoughtful and constructive way.

We have a contingent liability connected with this issue. One of the big reasons that this particular business is in the lurch is because of the irresponsible approach taken by the member's party when they formed the government. They relieved the industry of the responsibility to continue to invest in the pension. As a result, we've now exposed pensioners and workers to potential losses. Once again, we are stuck in a position where we have to clean up the mess because of irresponsible actions taken by that party.

PETITIONS

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Re: support for chiropractic services in Ontario health insurance plan:

"Whereas elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need;

"Whereas those with reduced ability to pay, including seniors, low-income families and the working poor, will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments;

"Whereas the elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

"Whereas there was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province."

I support the petition.

OPTOMETRISTS

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I have a petition to the Ontario Legislature.

"Whereas the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario will be considering a private member's bill that aims to amend the Optometry Act to give optometrists the authority to prescribe therapeutic pharmaceutical agents for the treatment of certain eye diseases; and

"Whereas optometrists are highly trained and equipped with the knowledge and specialized instrumentation needed to effectively diagnose and treat certain eye problems; and

"Whereas extending the authority to prescribe therapeutic pharmaceutical agents to optometrists will help relieve the demands on ophthalmologists and physicians who currently have the exclusive domain for prescribing therapeutic pharmaceutical agents to optometry patients; and

"Whereas the bill introduced by New Democrat Peter Kormos (MPP—Niagara Centre) will ensure that patients receive prompt, timely, one-stop care where appropriate;

"Therefore, I do support the bill proposing an amendment to the Optometry Act to give optometrists the authority to prescribe therapeutic pharmaceutical agents for the treatment of certain eye diseases and I urge the government of Ontario to ensure speedy passage of the bill."

This is signed by a number of my constituents, and I have affixed my signature as well.

EYE EXAMINATIONS

Mr Kim Craitor (Niagara Falls): I'm pleased to present this petition to the House on behalf of the residents from my riding of Niagara Falls.

"Whereas the 2004 provincial budget was not clear on whether adult optometry patients who have or who are at

risk for medical conditions, such as diabetes, glaucoma, macular degeneration and clinically significant cataracts would continue to be covered through the Ontario Health Insurance Plan; and

"Whereas Ontario's optometrists strongly feel that Ontario seniors, those under 20 and those with chronic sight-threatening diseases must continue to receive primary eye care services directly from Ontario's optometrists; and

"Whereas forcing patients to be referred to optometrists through their family physicians ignores the years of specialized training optometrists undertake to detect, diagnose and treat eye conditions; and

"Whereas almost 140 communities across the province have already been designated as underserved for family practitioners and the government's approach will only exacerbate the problem unnecessarily;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care immediately clarify that the eye examination services they provide to patients at risk for medical conditions will continue to be covered by OHIP and the coverage for these services is not dependent on a patient being referred to an optometrist by a family physician."

I'm pleased to sign this petition.

1520

VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS

Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the fire departments in Simcoe-Grey are strengthened by the service of double-hatter firefighters who work as professional, full-time firefighters and also serve as volunteer firefighters on their free time and in their home communities; and

"Whereas the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association has declared their intent to 'phase out' these double-hatter firefighters; and

"Whereas double-hatter firefighters are being threatened by the union leadership and forced to resign as volunteer firefighters or face losing their full-time jobs and this is weakening volunteer fire departments in Ontario; and

"Whereas Simcoe-Grey MPP Jim Wilson has supported Bill 52, the Volunteer Firefighters Employment Protection Act as introduced by Waterloo-Wellington MPP Ted Arnett, which would uphold the right to volunteer and solve this problem concerning public safety in Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the provincial government express public support for Bill 52 and willingness to pass it into law or introduce similar legislation that protects the right of firefighters to volunteer in their home communities on their own free time."

I of course agree with this petition and have signed it.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Ms Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): I present this petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas recreational trailers kept at parks and campgrounds in Ontario are being assessed by the Municipal Property Assessment Corp (MPAC) and are subject to property taxes; and

"Whereas owners of these trailers are seasonal and occasional residents who contribute to the local tourism economy, without requiring significant municipal services; and

"Whereas the added burden of this taxation will make it impossible for many families of modest income to afford their holiday sites at parks and campgrounds;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That these seasonal trailers not be subject to retroactive taxation for the year 2003; and that the tax not be imposed in 2004; and that no such tax be introduced without consultation with owners of the trailers and trailer parks, municipal governments, businesses, the tourism sector and other stakeholders."

I present this petition and attach my signature thereon.

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Mrs Maria Van Bommel (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Re: support for chiropractic services in Ontario health insurance plan:

"Whereas elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need;

"Those with reduced ability to pay, including seniors, low-income families and the working poor, will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments;

"Elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

"There was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province."

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Petitions?

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I have the pleasure to present thousands of petitions on behalf of the riding of Durham. Where do I start here?

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Re: support for chiropractic services in Ontario health insurance plan:

"Whereas elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need;

"Those with reduced ability to pay, including seniors, low-income families and the working poor, will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments;

"Elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

"There was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the"—nasty—"decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, the patients, the health care system, government and the province."

I'm pleased to sign this and endorse it on behalf of the many chiropractors in my riding.

OPTOMETRISTS

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the last funding agreement between the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and the Ontario Association of Optometrists expired March 31, 2000; and

"Whereas the optometric fees for OHIP-insured services remain unchanged since 1989; and

"Whereas the lack of any fee increase for 15 years has created a crisis situation for optometrists; and

"Whereas fees for OHIP services do not provide for fair or reasonable compensation for the professional services of optometrists in that they no longer cover the costs of providing eye examinations; and

"Whereas it is in the best interests of patients and the government to have a new funding agreement for insured services that will ensure the most vulnerable members of society are able to receive the eye care they need;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care resume negotiations immediately with the OAO and appoint a mediator to help with the negotiation process in order to ensure that optometrists can continue to provide quality eye care services to patients in Ontario."

I agree with the petitioners, and I have affixed my signature to this.

GO TRANSIT SERVICE

Mr Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): I'm pleased to present a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly from the Churchill Meadows Residents' Association. It reads:

"Whereas the city of Mississauga has, within a generation, grown from a linked collection of suburban and farming communities into Canada's sixth-largest city, and tens of thousands of people daily need to commute into and out of Mississauga in order to do business, educate themselves and their families and enjoy culture and recreation; and

"Whereas gridlock on all roads leading into and out of Mississauga makes peak period road commuting impractical, and commuter rail service on the Milton GO line is restricted to morning and afternoon service into and out of Toronto; and

"Whereas residents of western Mississauga need to commute to commute, driving along traffic-clogged roads to get to overflowing parking lots at the Meadowvale, Streetsville and Erindale GO train stations;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario, through the Ministry of Transportation and highways, instruct GO Transit to allocate sufficient resources from its 2004-05 capital budget to proceed immediately with the acquisition of land and construction of a new GO train station, called Lisgar, at Tenth Line and the rail tracks, to alleviate the parking congestion, and provide better access to GO train service on the Milton line for residents of western Mississauga."

As a resident of Lisgar, one of those who would take that GO train, I'm sure I join with all of my colleagues in the House, and I sign this.

LESLIE M. FROST CENTRE

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I have a petition to save the Leslie M. Frost Centre. It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Leslie M. Frost Centre is Ontario's leading natural resources education, training and conference centre, aimed at fostering an understanding of natural resource management, with a focus on ecosystems and how they can be sustained for future generations; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government refused to consult with municipalities and other user groups before taking this drastic action and continues to operate in a clandestine manner; and

"Whereas this move will hurt the people and economies of Muskoka and Haliburton, especially those in the local tourism industry; and

"Whereas the Frost Centre is a valuable resource for elementary, secondary, post-secondary institutions, as well as a variety of other groups;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government reverse the decision to close the Leslie M. Frost Centre."

I support this petition and affix my signature to it.

HEALTH CARE SERVICES

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a petition that has come to me from constituents both in my riding and the Sudbury riding. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberal government is cutting provincial funding for essential health care services like optometry, physiotherapy and chiropractic care;

"Whereas this privatization of health care services will force Ontarians to pay out-of-pocket for essential health care;

"Whereas Ontarians already pay for health care through their taxes and will be forced to pay even more through the government's new regressive health tax;

"Whereas the Liberals promised during the election that they would not cut or privatize health care services in Ontario;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We demand the McGuinty Liberal government keep its promises and guarantee adequate provincial funding for critical health services like eye, physiotherapy and chiropractic care."

I agree with the petitioners. I have affixed my signature to this.

1530

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): I have a petition I am pleased to present with respect to the delisting of chiropractic care. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Dalton McGuinty Liberals promised a health care system that gives us all the care we need when we need it; and

"Whereas chiropractors, optometrists and physiotherapists provide the necessary health care to the people of Ontario to maintain healthy and active lifestyles;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The Dalton McGuinty Liberals should keep their promise to invest in health care and restore funding to cover optometry, physiotherapy and chiropractic care under OHIP."

Beneath are the signatures of Tara Wallace and Tom Lewis of Ridgeway and Crystal Beach. I affix my signature in support.

HEALTH CARE SERVICES

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I have a petition that reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberal government is cutting provincial funding for essential health care services like optometry, physiotherapy and chiropractic care;

"Whereas this privatization of health care services will force Ontarians to pay out-of-pocket for essential health care;

"Whereas Ontarians already pay for health care through their taxes and will be forced to pay even more through the government's new regressive health tax;

"Whereas the Liberals promised during the election that they would not cut or privatize health care services in Ontario;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We demand the McGuinty Liberal government keep its promises and guarantee adequate provincial funding for critical health services like eye, physiotherapy and chiropractic care."

These signatures are from my riding of Toronto-Danforth, and I will affix my signature because I fully support the petition.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Pursuant to standing order 37(a), the member for Oak Ridges has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Education concerning the cost of the hard cap to class sizes. This matter will be debated at 6 pm.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy, Government House Leader): Pursuant to the standing orders, I have the orders for next week.

Monday, October 18: afternoon, Bill 106; evening, Bill 100.

Tuesday, October 19: afternoon, Bill 82; evening, Bill 106.

Wednesday, October 20: afternoon, opposition day; evening, Bill 100.

Thursday, October 21: afternoon, Bill 96; evening to be confirmed.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUDGET MEASURES ACT, 2004 (NO. 2)

LOI DE 2004

SUR LES MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES (N^O 2)

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 12, 2004, on the motion for second reading of Bill 106, An Act to implement Budget measures and amend the Crown Forest Sustainability Act, 1994 / Projet de loi 106, Loi mettant en oeuvre certaines mesures budgétaires et modifiant la Loi de 1994 sur la durabilité des forêts de la Couronne.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Further debate?

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): Mr Speaker, I would ask for unanimous consent to stand down our lead on this particular bill.

The Speaker: Do we have consent? Agreed.

Mr Bisson: Thank you, Speaker, and thank you to members of the House. Just so people who may wonder what that's all about understand, today we're supposed to be doing the energy bill, and as whip of our party I scheduled my finance critic somewhere else. Now we have a change of order and I'm not able to get him into the House, so here we are.

I want to speak to this bill. I'm going to be taking my 20 minutes, and I know my colleague from Hamilton, Andrea Horwath, also wants to speak to this bill. I want to speak to two different parts of the bill. I want to speak to the part of the bill that amends the Crown Forest Sustainability Act. I also want to speak to the section in regard to the health tax itself.

Let me start with the Crown Forest Sustainability Act changes. Before I do that, I just want to say, « Stéphanie, si tu regardes la télévision, je vais t'appeler à quatre heures et quart. » That's all about a radio interview I have to do at 4:15. I will be there.

My point is this: Section 1 of this particular bill deals with making amendments to the Crown Forest Sustainability Act. I want to read from the preamble to the bill so that people understand what we're talking about. It says, "An amendment to section 54 of the Crown Forest Sustainability Act, 1994 removes a requirement that a person have a sufficient supply of forest resources before the Minister of Natural Resources is permitted to issue a forest resource processing facility licence to the person." To most people, that probably doesn't mean a heck of a lot. Most people would see that bill and say, "Somebody wants to build a mill somewhere in Ontario and they don't have trees to process through the mill. Market forces will dictate and they can just build the mill. It's their money. It's not an issue. Who cares?"

I, however, have a whole bunch of questions around this particular clause. I, along with others, served in this House in 1994, when we passed the Crown Forest Sustainability Act, and the whole premise of the bill was this: Yes, we have to manage our forests and harvest our forests in a sustainable manner, obviously, by the title of the bill. But one of the things we said in the bill was that a company will be issued a licence to harvest the trees in the forests they're given a licence to, and the minister will reserve the right to redirect the trees to any other mill facility or any other user if that particular licensee does not have a use for the wood.

The other thing is that we tied the forest to the local community; we said the other thing you have to take into consideration is that if, for example, the plant in Timmins, called Tembec, has a licence to harvest wood in the Romeo forest licence, that wood has to go to the Tembec mill in Timmins. The reason we did that is that we didn't want to get into the practice that a mill situated in Timmins takes wood from its local forests and ships it to Manitoba, Quebec or anybody else who may want to

process the wood. We took the approach that the trees cut in Ontario forests (a) have to be processed in Ontario mills when it comes to crown wood—we're not talking about private land but about crown land—and (b) that the licence is tied to the local community and the minister must take into account the socio-economic impact on the community if it tries to move the wood out of the community.

I want to remind members that about two years ago Tembec tried to shut down the Kirkland Lake mill. There's a sawmill in Kirkland Lake, and Tembec, as part of its reorganizing and dealing with the American softwood lumber issue, basically said, "We're going to have the following approach: We're going to take the trees from our various licences for our various mills"—they had a licence for trees in the Kirkland Lake area, they had a licence for trees in the Timmins area, Cochrane, Kapuskasing, Opasatika and Hearst. They said, "We want to be able to ship trees across our licences. We want to be able to take the large-diameter trees and ship them to the mill in Timmins and take the small-diameter trees and ship them to the mill in Cochrane and shut the mill in Kirkland Lake."

At that time, when the government tried to do this—the Conservative government in that case was giving Tembec permission to do it—Howard Hampton, my leader, and I got up in this House, went to Kirkland Lake and did the things we needed to do to point out that there is a law in Ontario called the sustainable forestry development act that says the trees are tied to the local community and that Tembec should not be allowed to take trees in the Kirkland Lake area and move the trees from Kirkland Lake over to Timmins, shutting down the mill in Kirkland Lake.

As a result of our intervention and the work of IWA 2995 and all the workers of the mill and the mayor of Kirkland Lake, Bill Enouy, we managed to get the government to back down because they had to follow the law. The law said the trees belong to the local community, and you have to take into account the socio-economic impact on the community if you're going to transfer wood from one licence to another licence, even if it's within the same company.

That's the way the law is, and it's a good law. Most people recognize that our forests are there for the people of Ontario and that we should benefit from the forests. If we're going to harvest the trees, it should be for the benefit of the local communities.

Now, I look at this particular amendment. The amendment is basically saying that to get a mill licence, a licence to operate a mill to cut trees, you no longer have to have an adequate supply of wood. Some people will say, "What does that mean?" Well, I'll tell you a couple of things it might mean. I turn back to the whole argument that the Americans made on the softwood issue. They took the position that Ontario and Canada should take the position that trees should be put on the open market and the highest bidder gets the trees, and if the local mill loses out in that process, "Too bad, so sad, you lose."

Clearly, in Ontario and Canada we have a much different approach to managing our forests than they do in the United States. We're much more sustainable, but we're also taking into account that the forest is there for the local community. You can't ship the trees out and ship the jobs out to other communities or ship them out of the province or out of the country, for us to lose the processing jobs.

1540

This amendment to the Crown Forest Sustainability Act has some possible impacts. I'll tell you, there's no way in heck I'm going to allow this part of the bill to go by without some serious debate about what it really means, because it could mean a couple of things. I'll use the example of Tembec. Tembec, under this clause, could now say, "Trees are no longer tied to the mill. Because they're not tied to the mill, we can take the Kirkland Lake trees and send them to Cochrane and we can take the Kirkland Lake trees and send them to Timmins." Timmins and Cochrane will benefit; Kirkland Lake is gone. They could go and say, "The mill in Opasatika is shut down and the trees are going to be shipped to either Hearst or down to Cochrane," or, "We're going to shut the mill in Kapuskasing." That's one of the interpretations of what this could mean. I want to hear very clearly from the minister, in the responses to my speech or later on in his particular time to debate, if indeed this legislation would give the ability to a company to ship trees from one mill to the other.

C'est clair que les arbres dans nos forêts sont là pour le bénéfice de la communauté. On ne peut accepter nulle part dans la province, dans des communautés comme Hearst et Kapuskasing, que les arbres dans la forêt à Hearst soient envoyés soit à Kapuskasing soit à Timmins, au Québec ou au Wisconsin pour être « processés » dans un autre moulin quelque part. Ce n'est pas acceptable.

Je veux savoir clairement, pour le ministre dans le débat, est-ce que ce projet de loi donne l'habilité à une compagnie de dire, « On va envoyer les arbres, sous notre licence de notre forêt, à un moulin autre que le moulin auquel la forêt est attachée »? C'est quelque chose dont je voudrais parler directement avec les opérateurs des moulins et autres pour savoir exactement ce que cette section-là veut dire.

The other thing is that it might have an implication for what we had in the softwood lumber dispute between Canada and the United States. Everybody will know we just went through a heck of an ordeal yet again, where Canada was warned before the tribunal that it was not protecting its lumber industry, and the Americans had to withdraw the countervailing duty they had put on lumber in Ontario. Companies, communities, governments, everybody fought very hard to make it a reality that we hold our sovereign right to manage our own forests, and that the Americans were being unfair in putting that countervailing duty.

I want to remind people that the American government, the American administration of George Bush, was very clear that they wanted Ontario and Canada to

change the way we deal with the management of our forests. They wanted to see our forest timber go by way of open tender. We have opposed that in Ontario and Canada because we know what it means. There's a real danger that mills outside of Ontario may be able to bid in the processing of those logs, to the detriment of communities in Ontario. That's what the Americans wanted.

I look inside this budget bill, and I want to quote what it says under subsection 1(1): "The minister may issue a forest resource processing facility licence in accordance with the regulations." That is pretty loosey-goosey when it comes to saying that the trees are no longer tied to the mill, and if the trees are no longer tied to the mill, that's a difficulty.

I also want to speak to the issue of value-added abilities. For example, in Mattice, Ontario, il y a la communauté de Mattice qui essaye de débiter avec un projet de cèdres pour faire la valeur ajoutée dans cette communauté. Une grosse difficulté que les frères Duval ont eue, pour s'organiser avec cette entreprise, était d'avoir accès au bois de qualité. Quand ils ont fait la demande pour leur licence, ils ont été pris dans une situation avec la licence pour opérer leur plan. Leur plan était beaucoup moins grand que ce dont ils avaient besoin pour être plus viable quand ça vient à l'économie du plan lui-même.

Si le projet de loi veut simplement dire qu'on va donner l'habilité, dans ces circonstances, de donner une licence un peu plus supérieure, on peut avoir ce débat. Il y a des positifs puis des négatifs là-dedans. Il y a les deux bords de la médaille dont on a besoin de parler. Mais clairement, cela a besoin d'aller en comité pour regarder en détails ce que ça veut dire. Est-ce que ça veut dire que les frères Duval auraient pu avoir une licence supérieure quand ça vient à « processer » dans leur moulin? Si oui, possiblement ce n'est pas une méchante affaire. Mais si ça veut dire, j'ai peur, que les arbres sont plus attachés à la licence de l'usine en question, ça veut dire quelque chose de très dangereux.

On that particular one I just want to put the government on notice that this bill will clearly have to go to committee. We'll have to have some pretty clear discussion about what that section means.

I want to say again, if it's only about saying the Duval brothers of Mattice, who tried to get a cedar mill going, failed because they couldn't get a licence to operate a large enough facility, that's a debate; there are pros and cons to that. There's a pro side that says, "Let the entrepreneur do what he or she needs to do." The con side says, "What do you do if you haven't got the trees, and how do you deal with that in the confines of the Crown Forest Sustainability Act?" That's a debate we could have in committee. That's not a bad one. But if it's about saying, "Hey, the market is open; the trees are no longer tied to the mill," and the forestry company can send the trees anywhere it wants, to another facility it owns, or sell the trees to another facility, that is a disaster for northern Ontario. It will shut communities down, and I say that upfront.

I'm hoping I'm wrong. Please prove my wrong. We'll see when we get to committee and once we've heard

from experts if in fact the interpretation of that is what I think it is.

Cellphone ringing.

Mr Bisson: That's not mine. I don't know who the heck that is. Somebody's cellphone was ringing but it wasn't mine. Oh, hell, it is mine.

I've got to tell you the story: The only person who has that number is my wife. Murielle, I'll call you back after the debate—unbelievable. I don't give anybody that number. My wife has that number. My Lord, it must be important if my wife calls me. Or she sees me on television and she's saying, "I'm going to give him a razz." Fine, dear, that was a lot of fun. I just lost my BlackBerry; I'll have a good weekend. That means I won't have to work this weekend.

The other part of the bill that I want to speak to is around the Income Tax Act. Simply put, that is the regressive tax that this government promised it was not going put in place. I remember before the last election Dalton McGuinty said, "Vote for me and I won't raise your taxes," and immediately upon being re-elected, what did he do in his first budget? He gave Ontarians the largest tax increase I've ever seen. Bob Rae would be shaking in his boots, watching the God-darned increase that he gave; my Lord. I've got to say that this particular tax increase—unbelievable. This is a government that promised it was not going to do a tax increase, and here they did it.

They do this because, they say, "Oh, the bad old Tories left us a deficit. Oh, Lord, they left us a deficit and we didn't know. Poor us. We made all these promises and we had good intentions. It's the bad old Tories." Come on, give me a break. I remember sitting on the estimates committee with Gerry Phillips, the then-critic of finance. I want to read a couple of quotes that I heard from Gerry, specifically in estimates—not finance—prior to the last election.

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): It was in May.

Mr Bisson: It was in May, as my good friend was just saying. In the estimates committee on June 3, 2003, Gerry Phillips said, "I therefore take it that there is a \$5-billion risk in the budget.... So, Minister, I say to you again, I do think your budget is high risk." He knew there was a \$5-billion deficit. To all of a sudden say, "Oh, God, we didn't know. We're so sorry, Ontario voters, we have to raise your taxes because the bad old Tories told us they had a balanced budget and we believed them"—come on. I didn't believe them and neither did Gerry Phillips. The reality is, Gerry Phillips knew.

I want to read another quote from Gerry Phillips. This was just on the eve of the election, August 13, 2003. Actually, it was my good friend Monte Kwinter, the Solicitor General. He said specifically, "...accused the government of hiding the fact it has a growing deficit that could reach \$5 billion," in the Canadian Press on August 13, 2003. Now we have two members of cabinet—

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): Senior members.

Mr Bisson:—senior members of cabinet, who prior to the election knew there was a deficit. It was no sur-

prise to anybody. And all of a sudden they're all saying, "Oh, God, I got amnesia during the election. I didn't know there was a deficit. That's why we have to raise taxes."

1550

Listen, all we're saying on this side of the House is, be straight. If you think you have to raise taxes to provide for better health care, say so before an election. That's a clean debate. I'm prepared to have the debate. In fact, we had the debate in the last election. If any political party wants to stand up and say, "We think a major investment has to be made in health care and we need to raise your taxes," that's a fair debate. Let the voter decide. But when voters go out and give the government a majority on the basis of their promises, which includes no tax increases, I would say they're being—I can't say less than truthful because that would be unparliamentary. I can't say they lied because that would be unparliamentary. I can't say they deceived because that's unparliamentary. I'm out of acronyms. I don't now what to call it. But I can tell you that it's different than what they promised in the last election.

The last part of this is the other interesting part. They zap Ontarians with one of the largest increases we've seen in a whole long time in this Legislature. The Premier goes on radio and runs the following ad. The ad reads, "I'm Dalton McGuinty, and I want you to know that every penny of Ontario's new health premium will go to health care. It means shorter waiting lists for radiation and chemotherapy, nine new MRI sites, home care for 95,000 more Ontarians, meningitis vaccination for children, 8,000 new full-time nursing positions. Together we're going to build a health care system we can all be proud of. Trust me. I'm Dalton McGuinty. I make promises and keep them."

Listen, guys, in your own budget document, the last budget document, you guys took \$200 million out of the health tax you put in and what did you do? You put it into the Ministry of the Environment to pay for water and sewer, and then said, "It's a health care expenditure."

I'm sorry, I go back to—what's his name again?—Dalton McGuinty, Premier of Ontario. "I'm Dalton McGuinty, and I want you to know that every penny of Ontario's new health premium will go to health care." Is that health care? That's the Ministry of the Environment. If you want money for the Minister of the Environment, (a) find the money somewhere within existing expenditures, or (b) be clear with voters and raise their taxes and tell them why. The part voters don't like isn't so much the fact of the tax increase. That's a political issue. What really galls them is that you said one thing in the election and you did completely the opposite. Then you get elected and you say, "I'm going to spend every dime in health care," and then you go out and put it in the Ministry of the Environment.

We're saying, listen, guys, you've had a year now. You've found your feet in being the government. You have supposedly got a head of steam. I hope you guys, in your second year of what's going to be a four-year term,

are smarter than you were in your first, because the first year has been a disaster. You've broken 80% of the promises you made to the voters of Ontario.

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): What would you give them, A to F?

Mr Bisson: I give them an F minus. Eighty per cent have been broken. Here we are in the second year and you don't seem to be starting on a better foot, as we debate this bill and take a look at what you're promising.

I say to the members across the way that you should basically do what you said you were going to do in the last election and hold to those promises. We, as New Democrats, support many of the things you had in your platform because you stole them from ours. We would be willing to vote for them. But don't start breaking all of your promises now that you're the government. People see that as being less than honest, and I don't know how that serves Ontarians or this Legislature well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Joseph N. Tascona): Questions and comments?

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): I was going to comment on the member opposite's excellent comments on the lumber industry and protecting the north. I want to take a couple of moments on that and say, for the record, that there's nobody on this side of the House who is sitting here plotting any kind of pending disaster for the communities in northern Ontario. In fact, to the extent that the concerns raised with respect to regulations are legitimate, I want to give assurance to the member opposite that we certainly want to look at those.

I understand quite well why the sustainable forestry development act would add benefits to the live-work relationship in having trees used, shaped, cut and what have you in the communities they are in, because we want to protect workers in the communities they live in.

With that having been said and with that commitment given, I want to talk a little bit about the health care issue that was raised. The late, great Sterling Hunt gave me two pieces of political advice years ago. First, tell people what's broke and how you're going to fix it. The second was even more precious: Always deal with the cards you've been dealt, not the hand you wish you had. The simple reality is that we were dealt a pretty nasty hand. I remember in the election campaign talking about issues and suggesting a potential \$2-billion shortfall, and the Tory candidate I was running against at the time wanted to know what I was smoking, what planet I was from and when I was going to quit my fear mongering. It's pretty clear that we weren't fear mongering.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I also want to respect the comments made by the member for Timmins-James Bay on Bill 106, because he does know of which he speaks and he does an admirable job of defending a very important resource in the riding of Timmins-James Bay. In fact, I think the response by the Liberal government is somewhat weakened because it's clear they're not sure what's in Bill 106. It has just been demonstrated by the previous speaker.

I will not attempt to update anything that has been said by the member for Timmins-James Bay except on the first go-round on this bill. It's clear that it does affect the licensing process of what they call "processing facilities." That means they can harvest trees in other areas, bringing them to a central processing area. But more importantly, it increases tax. There are a couple of sections here, if you read the preamble of the bill, that are no surprise. If you look at any government bill, by and large it outlines what they're going to do and how they're going to pay for it.

Here's a forestry bill, which they're talking about, and in the same bill there are amendments to the Income Tax Act. I'm not cutting down trees to print cheques, but here it is. It's quite hidden in a bill that some would read—if you read the title of this bill it's called An Act to implement Budget measures and amend the Crown Forest Sustainability Act, 1994, which was an NDP bill. When I look at this bill, I'm disappointed. I might put on the record here that today's order of the day was Bill 100, which is the electricity bill. They've stuck it on to discussions for next week at night. The point there is that they're trying to hide it from the mainstream viewer to talk about electricity when the lights are out. They want to keep it in the dark, because I can tell the taxpayers that there are tax increases in this bill. Your electricity bills are going to be higher, and taxes as well.

Ms Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): It gives me great pleasure to commend my colleague from Timmins-James Bay on his comments on Bill 106, particularly because I think he has really taken the time to look at pieces of the bill that perhaps would have gone unnoticed by others and, in doing so, has admirably represented the interests of the riding he represents, particularly the jobs and the livelihood of workers in that riding. As you know, it's quite a diverse riding, a huge riding where small, obscure pieces of a bill like this can have huge impacts that, without his strong advocacy, could very well go unnoticed as bills like this get passed. The reason they could go unnoticed is because, quite frankly, we all know that voters in Ontario, as well as ourselves in the third party and in the official opposition, have focused mainly on the extremely regressive health tax that is implemented by Bill 106.

I want to say that Mr Bisson not only has an extremely competent and capable understanding of the issue but also keeps his eye on the ball to make sure that every time there's a possible threat to his community, he's able to stand up with passion and vigour to defend the interests of, particularly in this case, the forestry industry and the pulp and paper mills that are so apparent in his community. I think the important thing he raised is that the devil is often in the detail, and unless you're explicitly stating exactly what your goals are when you bring legislation such as this, it's left wide open. That's where the risk lies, and that's where Mr Bisson has done such an excellent job in making sure that people are aware of this. From the comments of the member from the government side, perhaps it will go to committee for further discussion.

1600

Mrs Maria Van Bommel (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex):

I would also like to comment on the comments that were made by the member from Timmins-James Bay. I am not going to get involved in or discuss the issues around the Crown Forest Sustainability Act. I'm not going to pretend to have any expertise in forestry, but I did enjoy the member's attempt to impersonate the Premier of Ontario in his comments, and I'd like to discuss that whole comment about how every penny of the Ontario health premium will go to health care.

I should point out to the member that, in the act—

Interruption.

Mr Bisson: This time it's hers. Never throw stones. You never know when it's going to come back to you.

Mrs Van Bommel: That's right. You never know. Absolutely.

I have handed my BlackBerry over, and I apologize to the assembly for that. That is quite a sound when it comes across the mike—no question about it.

As I was saying, I want to point out that section 11 of Bill 106 very explicitly tells us what's going to happen and how we will deal with the whole issue of accountability around the revenue we receive from the Ontario health premium.

I'm going to quote from that: "The public accounts for each fiscal year shall include information about the use of the revenue from the Ontario health premium." Not only does it do that, but it also says, "A standing or select committee of the Assembly shall be appointed to review the Ontario health premium within four years after this section comes into force." So there is going to be accountability by this government for—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Reply from the member for Timmins-James Bay.

Mr Bisson: I want to guarantee the member from Lambton that it wasn't my wife calling you. I've got to tell you, she doesn't have your number, so it couldn't have been her, and it wasn't me because I lost my BlackBerry. That is really funny the way these things go off sometimes.

I want to thank all the members for their comments. To the member from Ancaster, I hear what you're saying but it really comes down to what the member from Hamilton East said. The devil is in the detail. I've been around here and you've been around here long enough to know that when you have a piece of legislation that doesn't clearly state what the intended goal is, as the member from Hamilton East says, it really makes you wonder.

In addition, we're giving the minister the power to make regulations on the bill, and that worries me a bit because I know the kind of pressure the minister is under to do exactly what I talked about, and that is to open it up so that forestry companies can move trees from one licence to the other. I know they've been wanting to do that for a while, because they see this as an opportunity to make more money. They say that if they can increase production in one central mill facility somewhere, rather

than having two or three mills in different communities, they can make more money.

I know my good friend Mr Ouellette actually worked with us. I've got to say, in fairness to that debate around Kirkland Lake—I failed to say that in my debate, but it should be said—it was a meeting in my office with then, Minister Ouellette that basically stopped Tembec from doing what they were trying to do. I failed to say that, now that I look over at him, because I don't even think he knew what the ministry was up to, what they were trying to do. The local bureaucrats were trying to give Tembec that ability to move the trees out of Kirkland Lake, and they hadn't even told the minister. I want to thank Jerry Ouellette, who's here now, because there was a meeting late one night in my office and we had everybody together.

I want to thank all members for the debate. I look forward to this debate. As I said, we need to get this section off to committee, because it's very serious business for northern Ontario. It better not mean what I think it means.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): Let me begin by assuring you that my BlackBerry should not go off. I don't believe my wife would be watching anyway.

It's my pleasure to stand up and talk about some of the changes that are inherent in this act, in particular the changes to the Income Tax Act. It has now been a year since we've been in office and this decision, the health premium decision, was one of the most important decisions and in fact one of the toughest decisions that I think we had to make. But we had to make that decision in order to address the revenue shortage we were facing, in order to address the structural deficit that we inherited.

We all know, when we look back to the Magna budget—I guess it's over two years ago now—when we look back to the income tax projections, the provincial sales tax projections, the asset sales projections, they were not a little bit off; they were three or four times less than was projected. That was part of the structural deficit we had to deal with, but there are other aspects of it as well. This wasn't something we could wish away. It was something that was going to require some tough decisions on our part, something we had to face up to.

Our choices were stark. We could cut back in the big expenditure areas in government to deal with that \$5.6 billion that we were short, in places like health care and education. We could have looked at running a deficit, running that structural deficit, and, frankly, running the finances of this province into a hole.

We rejected both of those because, number one, we knew the people of this province did not want us to reduce our expenditures, did not want us to reduce our commitment to health care and to education. Number two, we knew that the people of this province want to see it managed in a fiscally responsible way. They don't want to see the burdens of today thrust upon the generations of tomorrow. So we decided that we would phase out that deficit. We couldn't continue to run a structural deficit in this province. We looked at the problem and we

decided we were going to have to face up to it. We recognized the need for additional revenues. We recognized the firestorm it would create when we made this decision, but we felt it was the right thing to do. We chose the third option. So we will phase out the deficit, we will improve health care and education, we will live within our means, but to do this, we have to implement this health care premium.

I want to speak just a little bit about the leadership of our Premier through all of this, because it's something that I think each and every one of us on this side of the House is extremely proud of. Our Premier has had to weather a storm that began way back, subjected to personal insults unlike any leader I can recall in the history of this province, both before the election, during the election, and in facing up to the aftermath of this budget. It's been tough, but he has weathered that storm. He has stood tall. He's been resilient. Frankly, he's shown what leadership is all about, and that is making the right decisions, standing up for what we believe in, doing the right thing for the people of Ontario.

And the people of this province are beginning to recognize that. More and more every day, I'm receiving compliments on the way the Premier has handled himself. We've seen, in the last three days here in question period, question after question to the Premier. He hasn't even raised a sweat in swatting away those questions. This Premier is standing strong, standing proud, and we're proud of the job that he's done for us.

I haven't even mentioned the health care accord with the federal government. We all know that would never have happened had it not been for this Premier's supreme negotiating skills, had it not been for his determination in Ottawa in getting the federal government to come onside and begin providing more funding for health care. We're very proud of the work he did there. My time is winding down, but we're starting to see the results already.

My time is going to be shared with the member from Mississauga—East?

Mr Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): West.

Mr Duguid: Mississauga West. But in my remaining 30 seconds, I just want to say the results are coming in already. Some 21,000 more people this year alone will have improved home care—an investment of \$73 million this year. Over time, it will rise to 95,700 Ontarians who will get improved home care. Some 8,000 more Ontarians this year will receive improved social services that will help them stay in their homes, things like Meals on Wheels. We're seeing improvements in primary care, community mental health and long-term care, improvements in education. The relationship between cities and the province has never been the same; it has never been as good as it is today, probably in the history of this province, certainly in this generation. We're making great progress.

I'm going to pass it over now to my colleague the member from Mississauga West.

1610

Mr Delaney: Just before I add my comments to this bill, I'd like to add something personal.

Earlier this fall, our opposition elected a new leader, and while our party leader has properly congratulated the new leader of the Progressive Conservatives, I'd like to say on my behalf, and echo the sentiments of some of my members in caucus, that two sitting members of the opposition party, the member from Oak Ridges and the member from Whitby-Ajax, put their lives, their careers and their beliefs on the line. While we do not agree with all they stood for, we recognize the sincerity of their feelings and commitments and we applaud them for reflecting the feelings of those who believed in them. As their colleague, I say to them well done. We are, as your colleagues, proud of you.

One year ago, Ontarians voted to change the way things were done in Ontario. Most especially in health care, Ontarians said the status quo was not acceptable and that creeping privatization by the former government was even worse than the status quo. However, what neither Ontarians nor their incoming government knew in mid-October 2003 was that the previous government had left us a legacy deficit of an eye-popping \$5.6 billion.

So the first task of Ontario's new government was to dig itself out of a \$5.6-billion hole, mindful of our commitment to Ontarians to achieve a balanced budget. We had hoped to get to that balanced budget from year one, but with a \$5.6-billion hole to climb out of, the choices were to either slash and burn facilities, services and lives or to find some of that missing revenue elsewhere, to reallocate our spending and our priorities and to attain a balanced budget by the time of our next election in 2007.

We were motivated by our commitment to Ontarians to restore and rebuild the things that Canadians considered to be part of our Canadian fabric and our Canadian identity: publicly funded, publicly delivered health care and publicly funded, publicly delivered education, along with the framework of programs and services that make it possible for Ontarians of modest means to dream big dreams and to attain them.

We chose to go to the well and ask Ontarians for a health care premium. Oil-rich Alberta has a health care insurance premium. British Columbia, whose government oscillates periodically between a left much further than our Ontario third party and a right that might cause our opposition to recoil, also has a health care premium.

What's important to Ontarians? Ontario wants its government to get to a balanced budget, keep its budget balanced and begin to pay down its accumulated \$124-billion debt—\$124 billion in debt. Some \$30 billion of that debt came on the watch of the previous government. This party only managed to do a paper balance by unloading Ontario's finest assets at fire sale prices—\$30 billion on their watch. On the watch of the third party, Ontario plunged more than \$50 billion deeper in debt. The fiscal mismanagement of the two previous governments ran up two thirds of all of Ontario's public debt in only 13 years.

These people should never be allowed near money. That's why Ontarians asked us to not merely fix our

public services but to keep them fixed by maintaining Ontario's finances, by keeping them sustainable with a budget where revenues and expenses balance year after year without fire sale asset disposals. That is exactly what this government will do.

That's why Ontarians realize that our health insurance premium is a responsible and sustainable approach to achieving a balanced budget and averting the type of sacrifice that all that bad money management forced on Ontarians for the last 13 years.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton): The member from Scarborough Centre continued the apology to the people of Ontario for not doing what they said they were going to do. The previous speaker from the NDP talked about their standing in front of a TV camera and saying, "I won't raise your taxes." Even though Gerry Phillips knew well in May two years ago that the budget was at a \$5-billion risk—and with the power blackout and all the evils that descended on Ontario in that terrible summer, even with all of that, he still knew that the budget was at risk—he continued to go about preaching to the people of Ontario during the election campaign that he would not raise their taxes, knowing full well that he would have no option but to do that.

When we inherited the government in 1995, Bob Rae was talking about a \$6.3-billion deficit. And what did that deficit come in at? That deficit came in at \$11.2 billion—from a \$6.3-billion promise.

What did we do in 1995? Did we wring our hands, raise taxes and say, "Oh, my goodness, we can't continue with this"? No. We rolled up our sleeves and got to work. We didn't spend an extra \$4.1 billion, which your government had done in the last half of that fiscal year. No; we brought in a mini-budget on July 26. After being elected on June 8, we brought in a mini-budget on July 26, which cut \$2.1 billion off that \$11.2-billion deficit. We rolled up our sleeves and got to work, something that this government will go down in history as not having done.

Interjection.

Ms Horwath: Thank you, Mr McMeekin. That's a promise kept. Go figure. Too bad it wasn't a promise kept when it came to the budget.

It gives me great pleasure to comment on the speeches of the members for Scarborough Centre and Mississauga West. I think the most important thing that was raised in their discussion was that it was a difficult and important decision for the government to make. The decision they made was to stick it to moderate-income families in Ontario.

In the speeches today we'll see once again, and we have been seeing once again, the excuse-making that this government has become famous for in their short term in office so far. They're laying their decisions at the feet of a previous government. They're talking about all kinds of alternatives, although the most important alternative, which they rejected, was to have a fair tax, if they needed to put a tax in. Instead, they decided on a regressive tax.

Although they talk about the fact that they had to make that decision because the other decision was cuts, we're seeing day after day in this Legislature cuts coming forward; in fact today, transportation costs for school boards across the province. We're seeing cuts raised by members of the opposition and the third party in areas of health care. We saw cuts to coverage in OHIP premiums, things like chiropractic, vision care and physiotherapy. Although they're claiming that the decision was between cuts and tax increases, in fact we got both and we got promised neither.

I'm quite confused about the way these members get up to defend Bill 106. I look forward to my opportunity in a couple of minutes' time to make some comments of my own, because this is the bill that sticks it to the moderate-income people in Ontario. It's the implementing bill to stick it to Ontarians.

Mrs Liz Sandals (Guelph-Wellington): I'm pleased to be able to respond to the comments of my colleagues from Scarborough Centre and Mississauga West on Bill 106, which among other things amends the Income Tax Act.

I'd like to tell you about a conversation I had in my home riding, Guelph, this week. I was speaking to somebody who's on the board of one of our health care providers. This board had sat down with the Liberal health platform. They were looking at what we had promised in our platform and what we have done in the year in which we have had a Liberal government. What they reported back was, "We were really very impressed with the degree to which you have responded to your platform. You said in your platform that you would do a bunch of things and you did exactly those things. You kept your promises."

1620

This was a board of health care providers sitting down and looking at what we said we would do, and they found we had kept our promises. We've provided additional funding for home care; we've provided funding for community mental health; we've provided additional funding for long-term care; we've provided funding for additional midwives in the community; we've provided funding for more full-time nurses in our hospitals. They went down the list of our promises and they said, "You have been keeping your promises."

How have we been able to keep our health care promises? We made a very difficult decision. We looked at the \$5.5-billion deficit that even Mr Tory is now admitting this party ran up, that this Conservative government ran up and we said, "If we are going to keep our health care promises, we have to be able to pay for them." I support the Ontario health tax.

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I very much appreciate the opportunity to stand and speak about Bill 106, and I hope I have a full opportunity later on to expand on it.

I wanted to expand on some of the remarks of the member from Timmins-James Bay regarding the impacts of the changes to the Crown Forest Sustainability Act. It

certainly appears in there that it is to deal somewhat with the softwood lumber deal. What came forward with the previous government was called a "changed circumstance review." One of the concerns the US government brought forward at that time was that the lumber was tied to the mills and that it should not be allowed.

The problem with that is that the entire softwood issue is not very well explained to the average person in Ontario. To give it a brief summary, effectively they've taken the crown stumpage fees that we charge in Ontario and compared them to fees charged in, say, Michigan. The difficulty is that in Michigan, for example, the crown, or in that place the state, pays for things like the construction of roads into the forest area to do the harvesting. It also pays, for example, for the replanting of trees and a large number of other things that take place in those areas, whereas Ontario—

Interjection: A subsidy.

Mr Ouellette: Yes, it's effectively somewhat of a subsidy. The actual companies that do the work are the ones that pay those fees here. They're saying that our stumpage fees were too low, but they weren't comparing apples to apples in that case. One of the issues they were concerned about was that the lumber was tied to specific mills and they wanted that removed.

I know the previous government said it loud and clear, stood by the industry and said that we wouldn't move forward with the changed circumstance review but we would look at other areas.

There were a number of other areas, such as the cedar mill and the value-added mill that the member from Timmins-James Bay spoke about. I hope later on to get into a lot more details about the potential impact of the Crown Forest Sustainability Act changes.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member from Scarborough Centre in reply.

Mr Duguid: Thank you to all the members—the members from Oshawa, Hamilton East, Halton, Mississauga West and Guelph-Wellington—for your interventions in this debate.

I listened closely to all the members, particularly the member from Halton when he spoke about rolling up his shirt sleeves and fixing the problem that the Tories inherited when they took office many years ago. Admittedly, it was a fiscal mess that they inherited. There's no question about that at all.

They did roll up their shirt sleeves. The difference is in how they dealt with the problem. They dealt with it by sticking it to the municipalities through downloading, sticking it to people on social assistance, sticking it to people in long-term-care facilities by reducing the quality of care, by reducing standards in those facilities, sticking it to people who relied on clean water and clean services through the Ministry of the Environment, and sticking it to our kids in our education system, which was totally falling apart and in chaos.

Our approach is different. In the last year, through this budget and through other initiatives, we're dealing with the vulnerable in our society. We've raised the minimum

wage. We've increased the premium for ODSP. It's the first time in eight years that that's been done, if not longer. I think it's actually a dozen years.

We've provided a rent bank of \$10 million. We're investing over half a billion dollars this year alone in our long-term-care facilities, increasing the standards in those facilities. We're investing in our cities as well: a \$1-billion transit deal with the federal government and the municipal government in Toronto, and \$90 million that we gave to Toronto to help them out.

There's a new era of co-operation with municipalities, something that that government didn't bring. In education, already 40% of our schools across this province are seeing the benefits of the change in government as they see reduced classes. We are making a difference already.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr O'Toole: It's my pleasure today, and I might say a surprise today, that I'm speaking on Bill 106. In fact, the order paper today shows that we were supposed to be discussing Bill 100, the electricity bill. Why we're not on that remains a mystery, but in the interest of completing the discussion on Bill 106, most of it, even listening to the speakers today—the members from Mississauga West and Scarborough Centre—and the responses to their comments, has been about health care. It's not surprising, because even buried in this bill on—

The Acting Speaker: The member from Durham—can we set the clock? It should be at 20 minutes. Thank you.

Mr O'Toole: Thank you very much for intervening there, Speaker Tascona. I don't think the government had any role in trying to limit my time to speak on this, but just to get it on the record. I want to bring some responsibility and sincerity to my remarks today by first acknowledging the member from Oshawa, who was trying to clarify some of the technical sections in his role as the former Minister of Natural Resources, a person who, in his work before coming here, knows a lot of which he speaks, which is the Crown Forest Sustainability Act—as does the member from Timmins-James Bay. I would never attempt to compete with those persons, who know a lot more about that topic and its importance to Ontario's economy.

I can say—if you want to recall some of the relationships with the forest industry and its importance to Ontario and, more specifically, northern Ontario—that in the presentations made on Bill 100, which we'll be speaking about on Monday, the industry itself is very concerned about the increased costs of electricity. The Bowater group made a presentation, on which I'll go into more detail on Monday. If you'd like to stay tuned or call my office, I'll send you a copy of my remarks. They said the impact on their operating costs could be as much as 35% because of the high cost of electricity in the use of mills and operations.

The pulp and paper industry, the petrochemical industry, the auto industry and the steel industry are waiting with some anxiousness, looking at the situation at Stelco, about the imminent increase in the price of electricity. It's not a question of if, but when and how much.

So I will reserve those remarks for later on, but I always think, of all legislations, how it affects my constituents in the riding of Durham. I think of how it affects people in Blackstock, in other communities like Courtice and Newtonville. These are rapidly growing communities, in many cases, that are struggling under a government that has incessantly increased taxes and reduced services. That's really what they've achieved to date. In fact, I'd like to capture it more or less in two words: It comes down to trust and confidence in their leadership. Those are the two words that encapsulate most of which I'll be speaking about in the limited time I'm allowed today.

Trust can be briefly presented. The arguments that demonstrate that trust has been broken were the 231 promises, which everyone here knows, including the government. They've acknowledged it and admitted it. But I think we should be asking a question, because I think there are more than 231 promises. It became eminently clear when we started to review the 60-page secret document, which I've obtained a copy of. Well, we forced them. In fact, John Baird, Frank Klees and Jim Flaherty, as well as our new leader, John Tory, argued quite strongly about the release of this secret document on the costing of the election promises.

1630

When I looked through the election promises, I was looking specifically for my ministry, the ministry that I'm critic for. In a positive way, they haven't even costed some of the Ministry of Energy promises. They're not even costed. The Ministry of Natural Resources promises, if you go through here, aren't even costed. So it's not just the number, the \$18 billion or so that is in here; it's probably more than that.

The trust argument goes like this: If you say something to the people of Ontario to get elected—a promise, a commitment, a pledge—the people of Ontario put their trust in you and they vote for you. They voted for real change. It was a catchy phrase, and the people of Ontario fell for it. If they wanted to know the truth, they should have looked at the NDP document. At least they tell the truth. I think that trust was broken, and some would say it's not reversible. That trust is not reversible, because they have gone through a litany. Right from the opening day of the session, they announced a number of changes that will affect the pocketbook of every one of the people working at General Motors or Hydro. Our public sector people, teachers, my own family, children working in the hospitality industry, and young students are all going to be affected. They're going to pay more, not just for gasoline but for auto insurance. They're now going to pay to have their eyes tested. Everything—their taxes, their licences—is going up. The fee for a fishing licence or a driver's licence is going up.

There's one thing you can always be assured of understanding with a Liberal government, be it in Ottawa or here, and that is that they will tax and spend money recklessly. Look at the ad scandal in Ottawa. It's a good signpost to remind you of what's to come. They've only

been here a year, so there's no litany of disasters except the broken promises, as of yet, but wait until the cat gets into the henhouse.

I believe I've established that the people of Ontario should be very leery, if not completely untrusting, of the Liberals. Now, I'm not talking Ottawa. They have a dynasty there, and I understand Paul Martin had written a letter to get his buddy Serge Savard some more money, and he'll blame it on some staff person. Here, Greg Sorbara will probably blame it on one of the backbenchers, whether it's Wayne Arthurs or one of the others. They will blame it on someone, because they will not deliver what they promised.

Today we watched the Minister of Health skating and stumbling around what the OMA deal dealt with. We're not sure how much money. Even though they said they disclosed the information, we're not sure how much. What I'm dealing with is this: They have not just broken the trust, they have terrified seniors and people on fixed incomes, because the instructions I'm hearing are that doctors are being encouraged to not prescribe medicines. Persons on dialysis or with life-threatening lifetime ailments who are dependent on medications may—and I stress the word “may”—be in a situation where their access to proper drug therapy treatment, whatever, might be at risk.

I am concerned, and in my own riding I pay very close attention. In fact, I met with Brian Lemon and Anne Wright, the CEO and chair of Lakeridge Health—the volunteer board chair, a very committed person. I was quite aware of their concerns about the health care dollars the minister has been talking about in the last couple of weeks here in the House. Here are the real numbers. It has been published in the *Canadian Statesman* and all of the *Durham papers*. It's a full two-page ad. I'm not using a prop, Mr Speaker, I'm reporting a public document here. It's on October 13 in the *Canadian Statesman*. It says, “Lakeridge Health's Service Plan: A Work in Progress.” It's frightening, actually. It says, “In 2004-05, Ontario hospitals on average received”—you've got to watch that word “average”—“a 4.1% increase.” And that's what the minister keeps saying. However, “Lakeridge Health received less than 1%.”

Here we have a community servicing Ajax, Pickering, Uxbridge, Clarington, Scugog and Whitby. All these communities are rapidly growing. They're great places to live, with young families, people retiring to Lake Scugog. There's high demand, escalation of growth, over 500,000 people in Durham, young families. Emergency rooms—the hospital itself is going under a major rebuild. Lakeridge Oshawa is about a \$400-million project, I believe, with the cancer centre as well, which we announced, and announced the funding as well.

But it's 1% on their operating budget. “However, with health care inflation of about 8%, the hospital sector is experiencing extreme financial pressures. This deficit widens in future years if action is not taken immediately to reduce costs, including the movement of services to less expensive, more appropriate areas offered within the community.”

Now if you're getting therapy after you've had a hip replacement, and you're taking physiotherapy, you're going to pay for it. If you're taking chiropractic services, you're going to pay for it. Not only that, but it's been made very clear here today that most people are going to be paying a health care premium of anywhere from \$300 to \$900 a year. I've already established that you are going to be paying more for everything: gasoline, insurance, licensing for the car. Everything is going up at a time when governments should be responding to the pressures on the individual, the working family and persons on fixed income. That's the reality. Somehow the tax-and-spend Liberals just don't get the stress that the average working family is under. They're going to tax you more. You can count on it. If you can spell “Liberal,” you can spell “tax increase.” It rhymes, I think.

What I'm most concerned about is that you're paying more and getting less. They're talking about efficiencies. They're talking about moving services out of the hospital. They are simply asking to be treated fairly, as was made clear by the member for Nepean-Carleton this morning in his argument about his hospital. I sympathize with him; they got 0.6%. I wouldn't like to cast any suspicion but I would like to find out, and will spend some time on this, if some of the hospitals in government-member-held ridings may have got more. We heard today the suggestion that they were moving a cancer centre that was promised from Erie-Lincoln to Hamilton, which is Liberal-held for the most part.

Also, the member for Oak Ridges made the point very passionately, professionally and respectfully today that there is politics in his hospital as well. Greg Sorbara has moved it off. They shuffled the question. Mr Klees did not really get a proper answer, I didn't feel. I thought he should have had a late session with the minister to come clean and get the answer that—

Interjection.

Mr O'Toole: Yes, in fact it is a matter of record that the Minister of Finance became quite animated. I'm surprised the Speaker didn't remove him from the House. I do go off a bit. I'm trying to stay focused here on two issues. The issue of trust: The trust issue fits into the other part of the discussion here. The other part of trust is competence. We saw the Minister of Finance today pretty near flip out. Maybe that's not parliamentary, I don't know. Mr Klees simply asked a question about a hospital that services both his riding and Mr Sorbara's riding, and it was clear by the animation and the ill-tempered response by the Minister of Finance—let's leave it at that.

It's all hospitals. We know the OHA, the Ontario Hospital Association, by and large is livid. They are ticked. This means that nurses and front-line workers, whether it's in maintenance or food services or other patient services, are going to be under a great deal of stress. There are not enough operating dollars to take care of people appropriately. This should cause even government backbench members a lot of concern.

1640

I can recall when Elizabeth Witmer, as Minister of Health, had such a compassionate relationship with the

nursing association, and for the most part with hospitals and doctors. Let the record show, let's put it right on the record: What did we actually do in health care? It's \$10 billion, if I recall, and I think you should really spend some time thinking about that. It was \$17.4 billion in 1995, and I believe it moved close to or over \$28 billion.

It had been neglected, and we could go on. The NDP: There were empty beds all over the place. We implemented the Health Services Restructuring Commission under Duncan Sinclair, I believe it was, who was the dean of medicine at Queen's. I think there were 230 hospitals at the time. They looked at governance models and mergers and redevelopment. But I look around and I say, "What does it mean to my constituents in the riding of Durham? What does it mean to my adjacent ridings?"

I see a new hospital, up and operating in Northumberland, thanks to Elizabeth Witmer and her predecessors as Minister of Health. I look at Peterborough. There's a great plan there that's been well developed and well supported by the community. I look in my own area of Durham, and I see Lakeridge Health Oshawa.

I haven't seen a thing move since this group took over. As I've just outlined, in this two-page article the great stress—in fact, the current deficit at Lakeridge is \$19.4 million, and the deficit going forward for next year, without severe service cuts to the people who elected this government, is going to be \$23 million on an operating budget of about \$200 million. It's a multi-site operation and now they're talking about moving services out of other hospitals under the Lakeridge governance model.

I want to look at then and now. When I look at the work I did when I was parliamentary assistant in health with Tony Clement, we instituted and started the building of the first new medical school in Ontario's history. They're going to take credit for producing more doctors. We built the infrastructure for that to happen. We instituted, working with the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario, the recruitment and training and transition of foreign-trained physicians—25 a year, 50 a year, and we had increased it; these are foreign-trained professionals—to be able to work in the health care field.

Funding that medical school, we increased medical school enrolment. Mr Smitherman is talking about solving the problems by giving them more money. Sometimes with medical professionals money is not the only object. What they need are adequate facilities, MRIs and CT scans and other diagnostic support equipment.

One of the things we did that I think should be on the record is the Smart Systems for Health, which we put billions of dollars into. It's now building an information infrastructure, and that infrastructure is called Smart Systems for Health. It's best demonstrated with the North Network at Sunnybrook hospital. The North Network is a fully linked facility with other health care destinations, mostly in northern Ontario, but in other parts of Ontario and North America, where they can do rehabilitation therapy on-line, real-time, with a person in Timmins who has had a hip replacement, for example, with their doctor in attendance, and the orthopaedic surgeons and the physiotherapist in Toronto at Sunnybrook.

They're working out. We developed that infrastructure. We call it Telehealth, we call it distance health, we call it the North Network. Smart Systems was the record-keeping part, really, the data warehousing, if you will, of medical records so that hospitals, laboratories and doctors' offices could all share records. Long-term-care facilities could be linked with community care access centres. Building that technology infrastructure was forward-thinking, it was good management, and it was the right thing to improve access to health care.

These are just a few of the things that Elizabeth Witmer, Tony Clement and others had worked on to provide improved health care.

If you looked at long-term care, there had not been one long-term-care facility built in Ontario. We committed to 20,000 beds in long-term-care facilities.

So they should not talk about health care without making reference to the good work that's been done. The work they've done in health care is starting off with a very vulnerable position, as announced yesterday and the questions asked today. All they've done is increase the health tax on people and delist services. Stay tuned to pay more and get less.

We're talking about a Liberal government. Just look to Ottawa. Give this current McGuinty government time. You're going to pay a lot more for everything and get a lot less of any satisfaction.

I'm limited in the time I wanted to speak, but I boil it down to the idea of trust, which has been broken, and competence. I think I've demonstrated that the bulldog Minister of Health we have today and the Minister of Finance and their reactions are over the top. They're almost arrogant. But we will hold their feet to the fire as the loyal opposition, and we'll do it respectfully. But the people of Ontario have to know what we're dealing with. It's like trying to catch a snake.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Ms Horwath: It's my pleasure to make a few comments on the debate brought forward by the member from Durham, Mr O'Toole. I think he spent a good chunk of time outlining what some of the problems are from his personal perspective but also from the perspective of the people he represents. I think that's really what the government's not hearing.

Mr O'Toole spent some good discussion time on the specifics of what is disappointing the people of Ontario, the things that are causing them to feel betrayed, to feel that the promises of the government have been broken. He outlined for us, in a very articulate way, how the budget bill, Bill 106, the implementing bill, actually takes the theories of the budget and puts them into practice, attacking of course not only the pocketbook of middle-income and average-income Ontarians but also reflecting the fact that the government is prepared to do that while at the same time cutting services and reducing our ability as a province to meet the health care needs of the people of Ontario.

Mr O'Toole has done an excellent job in outlining these issues. I think his comments were right on the

money when it comes to the way this government has disappointed the residents of Ontario, the way the Liberal government has pretty much reversed the promises they made in their campaign, how they turned around and broke those promises and brought not only increased premiums for health care but did it in a way that hits the most vulnerable, the least able to pay, in a much higher way than it does those who have the most ability to pay.

I look forward to speaking on those issues further.

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): It's just interesting to hear this revisionism from our colleague from Oshawa. He doesn't talk about the fact that it was his government that closed 28 hospitals in this province. Three of them were in my riding. I'll name the three that the people of Eglinton-Lawrence lost. Remember North-western Hospital? Closed. Doctors Hospital? Bulldozed, closed. Branson Hospital? Closed. Three emergency wards gone from the heart of my riding. People used those services. That's your legacy. You don't want to talk about your sad legacy.

Nurses: I remember Mike Harris standing here saying, "We don't need nurses any more. They're like Hula Hoop workers." They fired 8,000. They all voted for it. All of them sitting there said, "That's great, Mike. We don't need nurses any more." That's their legacy.

Now we're proposing to put doctors back in communities. The NDP obviously doesn't support it and the Tories don't support it because they did nothing about it. The reality is we've got 120 communities in Ontario without a family doctor. We're trying to put doctors back in communities. They're against that. Why? We can't fathom it. We need doctors servicing people in every community.

It is a disgrace that in the province of Ontario we have 120 communities without doctors—the legacy of the Tories and the NDP, who shut down the teaching spots in our medical schools. That is an outright disgrace, an absolute disgrace. We're doing something about it.

Talk about the Tory health policy. Do you know what it was? It was the fake cheque circuit. They went everywhere with these rubber cheques and said, "Here's a cheque for so many dollars to build a hospital." There was no money in the account. That was their health policy.

1650

Mrs Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): I'm certainly pleased to join this debate. I want to begin by congratulating my colleague from Durham. I do know that during my tenure as Minister of Health he was a passionate advocate for more services for the people in his riding. It's as a result of his advocacy and the hard work of so many people within our party that our party was able to expand access to care in this province.

When our party came to office, people had to go to the major centres for cancer care, for cardiac care. Our policy was to make sure we delivered the services and make sure they were available to people throughout the province. We now have cardiac services and cancer services in communities that didn't have them before: up in

Newmarket, in Oshawa, in Mississauga, in Kitchener-Waterloo. We built a new hospital in Thunder Bay. We developed a good relationship and introduced nurse practitioners. So we expanded.

In fact, I'm pleased to say, as I take a look at the report, that the hiring of full-time nursing positions in about 129 of our hospitals increased in three years from about 19,000 in 2001 to about 25,000. That's thanks to the initiatives we introduced. We set up a task force with nurses. They told us what they wanted and we implemented every one of those recommendations. We set up the task force to make sure there were going to be more doctors in Ontario. We increased enrolment in the medical schools. We introduced programs with incentives to attract the doctors to underserved areas. We have a proud record. We can only hope that this government doesn't destroy the health care system, as they're prone to do.

Mr Wayne Arthurs (Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge): It really is a pleasure to be back here after a little bit of a break for the summer, although I must appreciate the member from Durham's—the social circuit and the community circuit. When I get back in the House here, it absolutely astounds me that he can spend 20 minutes defending the actions of his government over eight years, having served as a parliamentary assistant in health, speak to all the wonderful things at the same time that we have situations in his community, in my community, throughout Durham region, as an example of underserved areas. I believe that every municipality has passed resolutions and sent off correspondence to the province identifying the fact that they're underserved areas. They've encouraged the region of Durham to take a proactive stand on behalf of all the municipalities. So the situation in his own community is as desperate as it is in many other communities throughout Ontario.

He took the time early on to talk about his former leader and the former Premier. He talked about matters with our leader and the matter of trust. I have to tell you, in the recent election, a year ago, I had a chance to review a videotape of the 1990 campaign in which my opponent, in seeking re-election, stood in front of the camera and said, "Re-elect me as a government member and I'll deliver your hospital. I've had four or five years; just give me one more term and I'll deliver the hospital." Well, that member is no longer here and the hospital still isn't there.

The accomplishments of the last government, whether in delivering on hospital care—and it's not as though that member was a backbencher; she was a formidable member of the cabinet across the floor in that government. But the hospital's still not there; the doctors still aren't there. In spite of all of the policy initiatives, we're left with a legacy of a lot of challenges over the next three, four and five years.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member from Durham in reply.

Mr O'Toole: Again, I do thank the member from Hamilton East, Eglinton-Lawrence, Kitchener-Waterloo and Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge.

Just a couple of comments: I want to be on the record as saying that the member from Hamilton East does a formidable job. In the by-election, she defeated the Liberals there single-handedly because of her stand for faith in community. They knew they could trust her previous experience on council. She had demonstrated that.

But if I go to the member from Eglinton-Lawrence—who's been here long enough to know that most of what I said is accurate. The health restructuring commission set about—and these were health care professionals; these were not politicians—and said that the capacity and fairness about access and services closer to home was why Elizabeth Witmer and others set about to improve the infrastructure in health care.

I know that not just the nursing association, but Mrs Witmer, in her time as minister, visited and really paid attention to the issues not just in Durham, but across the province. Her work on the nursing task force is widely respected and went a long way to building the confidence that you try to demean.

The member from the Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge riding talked about the underservice. When he was on council and mayor of Pickering, I wrote to the chair of Durham region, because I was on the underserved application committees—one in Scugog, which is Port Perry, one in Clarington and also one in Oshawa. I shared that duty, of course, with the member from Oshawa, Gerry Ouellette. It came to me that there were all these committees spending all this time and resources. I wrote to the region and said to Dr Robert Kyle, the medical officer of health, "You have a problem in the region. Why does the region not step in and take a leadership position?" You, as a member of that council at the time, should have recognized that we did under-service, but what we did do was listen to the people that we were representing. We just didn't treat them disrespectfully.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Ms Horwath: I wanted to start by framing a little bit of the comments that I want to make, and I want to frame them around what I consider to be a document that basically would make the Artful Dodger blush in terms of the way it implements the pocket-picking that this government has decided to do in its first budget.

I guess the thing that is really difficult for me to fathom is—I'm new here, on the heels of a by-election. Before this budget was actually brought down, the by-election in Hamilton East took place. So the government had five days to get the signal, five days after that by-election happened and before this budget was tabled, to realize that they were headed in the wrong direction. The people of Hamilton East were already quite aware that they were headed in the wrong direction, but in a very callous fashion, they decided to ignore that loud and clear message and continue to bring down a budget that is, in fact, extremely regressive and that only serves to really pick the pockets of middle-income and lower-income people of Ontario.

What the government did in that budget is basically put together a tax system, a tax regime, a new tax, a

health tax premium that, in a way, affects those least able to pay in the most dramatic fashion. Not only was it clear that the middle-income earners needed to hide their wallets before that budget came out, but they also needed to recognize that the promises the government made around how that money was going to be spent were also going to be broken, as well as promises around the way the government was going to move forward in areas that people thought were sacrosanct. People thought that in fact there was going to be real change—real, positive, progressive moves in several areas in this province. In fact, the disappointments have been massive.

I want to talk a little bit in more specifics around the regressive nature of the bill, but first I want to talk a little bit about how the government refuses to acknowledge, refuses to admit, refuses to come clean with the people of Ontario about the fact that they did know what the finances of this province looked like. In fact, there are quotes we have from various meetings that took place prior to the government even being elected. In estimates committee, for example, on June 3, 2003, Gerry Phillips said this: "I therefore take it that there is a \$5-billion risk in the budget.... So, Minister, I say to you again, I do think your budget is high-risk." This was Gerry Phillips, to the then minister of the previous government.

1700

So it's really apparent and really obvious—these Hansards come back to bite you—that the government knew very well. It's not only a matter of the fact that they claim they didn't know, but it's in black and white that they did know. I think it's more important and impressive and it bodes well for a government to gain the trust of the electorate if they actually admit and come clean when these things are promised and then they have to backtrack because they break their promises. Had they just said, "Yes, we knew that was going to be the case, but we decided that we would perhaps address it in a different way"—unfortunately, they didn't give the respect to the taxpayer, to the voter, that they could have given and should have given.

In his speech a little earlier on, Gilles Bisson talked about some of the similar quotes from Monte Kwinter around the \$5 billion, so I won't bore you with those details again. But the bottom line is that, quite frankly, although the government continues to blame the previous government for not coming clean on what the fiscal reality was in the province, I think everyone around this table knows very well that—perhaps not to the penny and perhaps not to the dollar, but certainly the ballpark figures were well known by everyone. It's in not acknowledging this that I think they lose a lot of credibility and a lot of respect from the electorate.

The other issue is not only around whether they came clean or they didn't, whether they knew or they didn't, whether they broke promises or they didn't—but then as we go through the budget and how the expenditures are going to be spent and, again, the Premier was quite clear that health care dollars were going to be spent on health care. I clearly remember sitting in this Legislature when

those promises were made. I clearly remember hearing on the radio ads, which the Premier brought forward, that those premiums were going to be spent on health care.

In fact, the NDP called for the Premier to commit to establishing a dedicated fund. If you're going to say, "We're going to spend every dime of those premiums on health care services," then set up a dedicated fund and restrain yourself from raiding those dollars for other uses.

But in fact no dedicated fund was set up, and what do we see? We see in the very first budget that the government was bringing in about \$200 million more than they were spending in health care. So they had to cobble together some other things to spend it on. In fact, we all know that instead of spending some of that money on health care, it was spent on infrastructure initiatives like sewer and water pipes.

If you go to page 70 of the budget, which lists the revenue, it's very clear that \$726 million in health care transfers from the federal government is there. Then you tack on the \$1.635 billion that you take from the moderate, middle-income families through the health tax, and that works out to \$2.361 billion of actual health care spending. But there wasn't enough on the other side in expenditures to spend all that money, and so the \$200 million of sewer and water pipe and other initiatives are being purchased with that \$200-million difference in intake versus health care expenditures.

Not only that, but when you look at the specifics around how the tax is implemented—and again, Bill 106 is the implementing document. It's the document that puts together the changes to the Income Tax Act to fulfill the broken promise of a health care premium—what we see is that by the time this plan is completely rolled out, we end up with a very regressive system.

We keep saying that. We keep saying it's regressive. We keep saying that it hits lower- and moderate-income families more than it does high-income families. And people say, "What exactly do you mean by that?" Well, if you look at the figures, if you do the math, what that means is that someone making an annual income of between \$20,000 and \$36,000 a year will pay \$300 in health care premiums, whereas somebody making between \$72,000 and \$200,000 pays \$750, and individuals making more than \$200,000 pay \$900. At \$25,000, this surtax is 1.2% of your income. At \$200,000, the surtax is less than half a per cent of your income. That's what we mean by regressive. We mean that the lower-income people are paying a higher proportion of their income on the tax than the higher-income people, who pay a lower proportion of their income. That's just backwards. That is just the opposite of something that would be considered a progressive tax.

Even if the taxpayers of this province, even if the voters, who were so callously treated by the broken promises of this government, understood and decided, "You know what? I care about health care. I'm prepared to pay," then the very least this government should have done was to bring forward a tax that's progressive, a tax where those who are more able to pay, pay more, and

those least able to pay, pay less or not at all. Unfortunately, the government loses on both sides because people don't buy the health care tax, don't buy its necessity, and further to that are devastated by the fact that this Liberal government would bring forward such a regressive tax, the worst tax this province has seen in decades.

That's not only it. As some of the previous speakers mentioned in this debate, although this bill specifically speaks about the income tax issues, the premium, people will know that this budget overall has caused huge hardship in the province. I can tell you that prior to that budget coming out, as I mentioned before, during the by-election people were already worried about the rising cost of living and the reduction in their standard and quality of life. I talked to people, and many volunteers on the campaign talked to people, and what we were hearing was that people are sick and tired of having to claw, claw, claw their way through life just to maintain a decent standard of living. In fact, most of them were losing that battle. We talked to people who literally had parked their cars because they couldn't afford the price of gas. Then, on top of that, with the rising cost of auto insurance, people were parking their cars and were giving up on things like insurance for their homes. They no longer insured their homes because they couldn't afford the costs of those premiums either.

That's not all. We see that everything is going up: the price of gas, the price of hydro; all the costs are going up. Then we get a budget where the moderate- and lower-income people, the very ones who are on the brink, the very ones who could possibly be falling over the edge into poverty when regressive taxes like this come out—in fact, that's what has happened. People have actually lost the battle and they are now struggling for basic survival—never mind struggling for an increased quality of life, never mind struggling to have a future that's rosier, but struggling just to keep themselves out of poverty. In a province like Ontario, that's a sad commentary. After a huge campaign where the people of Ontario were told that it was time to choose change, all they got was the change from their pockets being picked by this government.

I want to talk a little bit about the claims the government has about how wonderful their expenditures are on the health care side. They're saying, "Yes, we've got this premium. We were committed to increasing the standard of health care in this province."

I can tell you that this week, just yesterday, I was speaking to some people from Hamilton who are extremely concerned because their hospitals are going to have to cut services. The hospitals are being told that they have to balance their budgets within the next year and a half or so. They're looking at their budgets and they're seeing that their own hydro costs are up, their own labour costs are up, their own overhead costs are up, so when they look to how they are going to meet these requirements of the government, they have to look at cutting services. Hamilton Health Sciences Centre, for

one, is going to come back to the government with a request, in fact, to reconsider the cuts this government is asking them to make. The same thing is happening with St Joseph's hospital. They are going to request that the government reconsider the fiscal restraints they are being asked to undertake.

1710

So I asked myself, what is different about this government? We saw hospital closures in the previous government. The people of Ontario chose change, and what are they getting? They're getting hospital cutbacks. They're getting cutbacks to services. They're getting threats that their communities are going to lose vital services right out from under them in the health care sector. I can tell you, that is not what people chose when they went to the ballot boxes about a year ago. What they did think they were choosing, I suspect, was a government that was going to be more sensitive to the needs of the average person in Ontario, a government that was going to understand the reality of the erosion of quality of life in our communities, one by one, across this province.

I think people are extremely disappointed in the performance of this government, and I suspect that if the government were being clear in their own discussions, they would know that that disappointment, that betrayal, that sense of having one put over on them has not gone away. People are really quite disappointed and they fear that the government that made so many promises has only succeeded in tarnishing the sense of public trust that governments can possibly have.

I would say that if you look at this Bill 106 and take it within the context of all the other broken promises this government made, you will know that the people of Ontario are going to be far worse off as a result of the implementation of the tax measures in the budget and some of the other measures that are here.

Even today we had a press conference with a number of parents from schools that, again, are being faced with cutbacks. People expected investment in education, people expected investment in health care, and instead they're seeing a government that is only doing the exact same thing as the previous government did, which is to bring them cutbacks and restraint. Kids in our communities, children, are being forced to walk greater distances to school. In fact, one family had a child who was on the bus, on their way to school, and the new policies were brought into place. The board didn't have enough money for transportation because of the cuts that are coming down, enforced by this government. What happens is that the one child gets put on the bus, so she goes to school with her friends. The mother then puts the other child in the car and drives behind the school bus to take the other child to school. That was one example, and there were two other families there to talk about that. The claim from these families was that in this particular board in Durham region, there were 600 to 1,000 families that were so affected.

Again, what I have to say is that not only is the health tax that is implemented in Bill 106 an extremely regres-

sive tax, and one that is going to affect low- and moderate-income families quite seriously, but when you take that together with the other pieces to the budget—and I'm not even talking about some of the other areas of restraint, where 15 ministries are flatlined or are getting less for the next four years, including ministries that people in Ontario are very concerned about, like natural resources, northern affairs, tourism and recreation, agriculture and food, and culture. Those ministries are important, particularly the Ministry of Culture.

In Hamilton we're seeing the results of that restraint. We're seeing it in this government's refusal to do the right thing by the Royal Botanical Gardens. They're not financing that facility in the way they should and in fact are now suggesting that it's the mismanagement of the board, when it's really a lack of commitment by this government to fund that agency at a level that other, similar agencies in the province are funded at.

I can tell you that people are tired. They're tired of getting hit. If my colleague Rosario Marchese were here, he would say they're tired of being whacked, and in fact they are. I think they really did expect a lot more from this government. I think the levels of disappointment are extreme, and I suspect that over the next several weeks, as the government continues to cut back and refuses to start looking toward other places to gain some of the dollars they could possibly be gaining to deal with some of these health taxes—I think it's quite a sin.

In fact, the employer health tax: There's some room there. There are some loopholes that can be closed so that the corporate sector can begin to pay their fair share. There are some opportunities that the government simply ignored in this effort, and in fact they need to start looking at a more fair way of running this province. It shouldn't always be low-income people. It shouldn't always be the vulnerable. It shouldn't always be Main Street instead of Bay Street that the government is going after.

I think the government ran an election campaign based on promises that it would be Main Street that would be benefiting from this government, as opposed to Bay Street, as people were not happy with the way things were happening with the previous government. In fact, the disappointment, the sense of betrayal, the lack of trust in the government's ability to fulfill its promises is something I hear loud and clear on a regular basis in my community.

Just to recap some of the things that I think are important around this bill—and similar to the previous debater, I'm not going to talk about some of the issues that my colleague from Timmins-James Bay, Mr Bisson, raised. He's quite knowledgeable on the Crown Forest Sustainability Act and the way this bill affects that act, so I'll stay away from that completely and thank him again for raising it.

But I do want to say that the regressive nature of the Ontario health premium, the way that this government has again chosen to attack and to whack and to stick it to moderate- and low-income families in this province is

unacceptable. And then you juxtapose that on the health care cuts, whether it's chiropractic cuts or vision care cuts or physiotherapy cuts from OHIP, whether it is cuts to the hospitals that are vital in our community, whether it's threatening the hospitals to reduce important services, whether it's cuts to education and transportation funding that are rolling out over the next little while. You can't have it both ways.

You promised you were not going to raise taxes. You were going to start progressing in a positive way and rebuilding this province. In fact, you've broken your promises on two fronts. Not only are you raising taxes in a most regressive and draconian way, but you're also making huge numbers of cuts to the very services and the very areas that I think the people of Ontario were quite clear that they wanted to see a rebuilding in.

That, unfortunately, Mr Speaker, is the allotted time that I have to make my comments, and I thank you for the opportunity.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): It's a pleasure to have an opportunity to comment on the remarks made by my colleague from Hamilton East.

I just wanted to say that I really don't think this premium that we're discussing today is regressive in any nature or in any way whatsoever. It's been made quite clear by a number of previous speakers that this is based on income. We're not the first province to introduce this health premium. Other provinces have done so already, and when they've done it, they've done it in a different fashion.

In Alberta, for example, a single individual pays \$528 per year, and a family of two or more pays \$1,056. British Columbia has a similar type of premium, where a family of two pays up to \$1,152. The Ontario premium is based on a progressive system, and that means that 43% of all Ontario tax filers and 48% of Ontario senior tax filers pay no premium at all. I think that's quite significant, and it's something that should not be overlooked.

We have brought this in because of the mess that was left by the previous government of over \$5.6 billion. This deficiency is something that we had to address very early in our mandate. We could have said, "No, we're not going to introduce this health premium." But I see at the door, through campaigning and, subsequent to that, as an MPP, that people want health care and education and the environment looked after in this province. And we, as a government, are attempting to do that.

When we received the books, when the Premier and the auditor looked over the books, they saw that there was a \$5.6-billion deficit. That had to be dealt with, and the appropriate way to do so was by introducing this health premium. I'm supportive of it, and I think it's the right way to go. In the end, I think people in Ontario—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. The Chair recognizes the member from Simcoe North.

1720

Mr Dunlop: I'm pleased to rise to make a few comments on the speech by the member from Hamilton East.

One of the things I wanted to mention very early, and I don't know if everyone has noticed it, but I want to put this on the record in the House: Has anyone realized that the Speaker's office and the Legislative Assembly has done a fantastic job on the air conditioning in this building? I don't know if you're aware of it, but there are all these tracks of air conditioning, and a lot of people may not even realize what that is. But I think it's a great job and I hope it stays comfortable throughout the year, when we're sitting in the winter as well as in the summer months. I just want to pay a compliment to the Clerk's office and the Speaker's office on that. I can tell you, we've had some days in here—I always remember the time we came back for the garbage strike and it had to be 200 degrees in this place. People were standing in their golf shirts, sweating, and it was unbelievable. So this is a really nice change. Apparently the carpet hadn't been taken up for a hundred years or something; they found old newspapers and that sort of thing.

I want to make a few quick comments on the member's speech. What's important here is that she spent some time on the health premium, and of course that's an issue that I think will haunt Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals for the next three years. You campaigned on one thing, on one set of rules, and Mr McGuinty wanted to be Premier so badly that he told everybody whatever they wanted to hear. Obviously he got elected and the people tossed us out, but now they're stuck with higher taxes after being promised that he wouldn't raise taxes.

So that's the crux of this bill. It's the crux of what the Liberals will hear for the next three years. Again, I'm pleased to make a few comments, and look forward to further debate on this bill.

Mr Bisson: I just want to—

Mrs Van Bommel: Is your BlackBerry there now?

Mr Bisson: The BlackBerry's there. My wife already called me. It's OK. Everything's fine. She wanted to know if I was making the 5 o'clock flight or the 9:30 flight. I've been happily married for 28 years now and that's why I answer my wife. We all know. Anyway, I digress.

I just want to say to the member from Hamilton East in regard to her issue around busing that I hear exactly what she's saying. I've had all the boards contact me within the riding of Timmins-James Bay. The effect of the policy, if enacted, is a bit wonky. Let me give you an explanation. The city of Timmins, before amalgamation of these boards and the creation of the new boards by the Tories, was the first area where school boards had decided to work together toward in-common busing. So rather than the separate board and the public board each having their own busing system, they decided they were going to pull together the resources and have one bus go down the road. It made lots of sense. If you pick up this kid who's in a separate board and the kid across the street is in a public board, it made more sense to throw them in the same bus. The buck goes a lot further.

So they've been basically pooling their money together for a while. Then along come the Tory changes.

The Tories create four boards, so some boards have a surplus, some boards have a deficit in their busing envelopes. So what they did was pool all their money together and they were able to provide an in-common service to all students, no matter which of the four boards they happened to be in, in whatever city they resided.

This particular change in regulation, as far as the funding formula goes, is going to have the effect of the boards not being able to co-operate anymore. For example, the English Catholic board, which was going to see, I believe, a 37% decrease to their transportation budget, will no longer be able to be subsidized by, let's say, the French Catholic board because there won't be any surpluses. The money those boards get is not going to be able to be interchanged, so the effect is we're cutting the ability of boards being able to co-operate together, and I think that's contrary to what we want.

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): To make my contribution in this very short couple of minutes of time, I would like to say that health care was front and centre prior to the election, during the election and has been occupying the most important part of this government during the past one year in office. I think that is what we have said in the past and what the people are saying now. They are expecting sweeping changes such as those we have brought forth in this first year.

We understand that the government has many other priorities and pressure from all other sources, but we have to deal with the most important issues that we are faced with. And I believe that the government has initiated very sweeping changes to bring some much-needed improvement to our health care system.

When we say "health care," we don't mean solely hospital or emergency services and stuff like that. We all know and we all share in the particular predicament that our large populace, the seniors in our society, shares by living in the many nursing homes or retirement homes in our province and the very positive changes that have been brought already and the various recommendations from our Minister of Health.

So our leader, Mr McGuinty, and the Liberal government are already dealing with the most important issue facing our health care system and, together with all the other requests from the various departments and stuff like that, which the people want us to enact as well, we are already delivering on a very important promise. Just to say some of the things that we have delivered in the health department alone, we have already started funding 2,400 full-time nursing positions, 21,000 more are receiving home care this year, there are 1,600 more front-line staff for long-term care, nine new MRI machines—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. The Chair recognizes the member for Hamilton East in reply.

Ms Horwath: I wanted to thank the members for Scarborough West, Simcoe North, Timmins-James Bay and most recently York West for their comments. I think it's clear that the members from the government side are still making excuses about whether or not they knew about the \$5 billion. I think they are still trying to claim

that they have no knowledge or understanding of the difference between a progressive and regressive tax, and that saddens me. I think that when push comes to shove, when you look at the balance sheet at the end of this fiscal year, you're going to see that there were far more broken promises than there were promises that were fulfilled. So far there are 231 broken; I don't know what the scorecard is on the fulfilled, but I'm sure the government's keeping score of that. I guess they have a couple of years to try to regain some confidence from the public, but my understanding from the people that I talk to is that confidence is not building in any quick way.

I want to thank my colleague Mr Bisson again for raising some of the details around what education transportation cuts mean in his particular community. As I mentioned, 31 out of 66 school boards are going to be cut. Almost 50% of school board transportation budgets are going to be cut by 2005-06 if the government goes forward with what was suggested in their discussion document that was recently published. So boards are concerned, parents are concerned and children are concerned. And that's just another broken promise when it comes to sustaining funding for education systems.

Again, I wanted to thank Mr Dunlop for his kind words in regard to my comments. I want to just complete my final comment by saying that I thank the government for giving us such a good opportunity to raise these issues with the public.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Ms Laurel C. Broten (Etobicoke-Lakeshore): I'm pleased to stand and speak on Bill 106, Budget Measures Act, 2004 (No. 2). I'll be sharing my time this afternoon with my colleague for Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge.

Amongst other things, Bill 106 amends the Income Tax Act to legislate the Ontario health premium. The health premium is an integral part of our government's strategy to transform health care, to make Ontarians the healthiest citizens in our country and to expand primary care and community-based care with the establishment of family health teams for 24/7 care, enhanced home care, community mental health services, among other important improvements.

But what does transformation mean, and the focus on health care? What will that mean in my own riding of Etobicoke-Lakeshore and for the citizens in my community? Over the past several months, I've had an opportunity to talk to many of the citizens in Etobicoke-Lakeshore and to visit many of our health care providers. I want to talk about what a transformation of health care and a government which is now focusing on health care will mean in our community.

1730

I have two community health centres, LAMP and Stonegate, which both provide innovative care in Etobicoke. They keep Ontarians healthy and they look at some of the broad aspects of health determinants. LAMP and Stonegate, in this year, have had an increase in their budget for the first time in a decade. So the users of those fantastic health care facilities in Etobicoke know what it

means to have a government that is focused on making sure we transform health care and reinvest in our primary care.

I've also had a chance to visit long-term-care facilities. We have many fantastic long-term-care facilities in Etobicoke. While the whole examination of long-term-care facilities was being undertaken in the province, I took it upon myself, with my staff, to visit those facilities. I went back recently when the government announced increased funding for long-term-care facilities.

Again, what does it mean for a resident in Etobicoke-Lakeshore to have increased funding in health care? It means we're going to have a better accountability system, it means we're going to freeze the copayment, it means they're going to be able to have a regular bath and it means increased funding again for those long-term-care facilities.

I've also had an opportunity over the last number of months to talk to nurses who are the backbone of our health care system, nurses who for the first time in a decade are feeling like they are part of a province where the government respects what they do. One of the focuses our government has brought as part of our transformation of health care is providing a focus on home care and expanding the home care services in this province. In Etobicoke, what that means is over \$3 million in new funding for the Etobicoke-York CCACs. That home care funding cannot be underestimated when you have the opportunity to talk to families, as I have, who tell you about the benefits of increased home care funding and increased resources to community-based agencies that provide assistance to families like Storefront Humber.

Earlier today, I had an opportunity to talk about the Dorothy Ley Hospice and the palliative care they give in our community of Etobicoke-Lakeshore and the end-of-life respite care for families. Again, organizations like the Dorothy Ley Hospice have also benefited from increased funding from our government.

So to talk about the transformation of health care and say that the premium is part of our transformation of health care is not underestimating the fact that it was a difficult decision. We face very serious fiscal challenges in this province. It was very sobering in the days following the election to reach the determination of how badly this province was in deficit. We already knew our health care system was failing us. We knew that social services had been cut so badly that they needed to be reinvested in. We knew about the problems in the education system. We knew about those things because we could see them. What we did not know was how serious and drastic the problem was in the financial resources because we had not seen it. We did not know that we would have \$5.6 billion in deficit that we would have to cope with.

But we did know what we had to do. We had to roll up our sleeves and we had to do what each and every Ontarian would do to make a tough decision to reinvest in something that one of their family members needed. If it was your grandmother and you wanted to make sure she had an extra bath a week, you would make the

decision to do what it took to invest in a health care system to keep her safe and comfortable in a long-term-care home. If you had a child who needed home care, you would do what it took to reinvest and make the decision to put the necessary resources into making sure your child could get chemotherapy in their home when it was too traumatic to take them to the hospital.

That is the very brave decision the Premier and this government made when we took what was a tough decision, which was a difficult decision to say, "We need to transform health care, we need to reinvest in that system, we need to ensure that we have the necessary resources to make sure that we can balance our books, that we can reinvest in health care and rebuild solid foundations so that this province can go forward in the future with healthy Ontarians and a strong health care system in the years to come."

Those are many of the reasons that all of us in this government want to be here to make sure that we can rebuild the health care system. As difficult a decision as it was, all of us know that we will ensure that through the public accounts committee that many of us sit on, we will account for every dollar of this health care premium and demonstrate to the people in this province—and I will show that to the people in Etobicoke-Lakeshore—that we have used that money to improve the health care system. I know that they will see real benefits in the community of Etobicoke-Lakeshore.

Mr Arthurs: It gives me pleasure to spend just a couple of minutes to speak on an act to implement budget measures. I want to look at it from the very broad context of not only what the issues are around the act, but to speak to why it's there, why this particular measure of a health premium, a health tax is put in place. It needs to speak to our government's intention, the vision of this government that Ontarians will be the healthiest of Canadians. We want to ensure in the longer term that we're not just healthy in the most prosperous of provinces, but that we set a standard for health across this country.

To complement the health measures act, there are provisions within the overall budget and framework for initiatives such as 2020 under the Minister of Tourism and Recreation to provide programs and initiatives for young people to reinforce the need for young people and families and individuals to pursue their own health agendas, so that in addition to the need for health premiums to deal with disease, to deal with health care, to deal with seniors and homes for the aged and nursing facilities, we all take individual responsibility to ensure, as part of a broader, long-term vision, that we are the healthiest of all Canadians.

Part of the decision-making with respect to matters such as our budget and the health care premium is showing leadership. During the past number of months under the leadership of Premier McGuinty, leading the other Premiers in council, there was the Premiers' conference in July in Niagara-on-the-Lake when they began to set out a framework for negotiations with the federal

government. That was followed up just this past month, in September, in a conference with Prime Minister Paul Martin. If we hadn't taken the initiative to put money on the table, to put our money where our mouth is, to say that we were prepared to go to our taxpayers to raise the funds necessary to meet the needs in this province, I don't believe that the federal government or the Premiers in the other provinces would have seen that we were serious. I don't think that the Prime Minister would have seen that we were serious about the needs of this province and the needs of the provinces across the country for the level of funding that was committed in that accord. The province of Ontario will see, I believe, in this year, some \$825 million as a result of that accord, and the accord will put some \$7 billion into the health care system across the country in additional money from the federal government.

So there is a need in having a vision of not only where you want to get to and what you want to be, but a need to show some leadership with regard to drawing your partners in, particularly the federal government, in the funding of health care in a very substantive way. The news yesterday that the federal government is sitting, in this fiscal year now, on a \$9.1-billion surplus will auger well for continued negotiations on matters of importance to the province of Ontario and of importance to the country where it requires federal co-operation.

I was pleased to hear from my colleague about the work that we have done on public accounts because I wanted to comment on the issue of accountability. It's not just a tax bill, it's not just raising dollars to do health care during the year, it's not just about the rhetoric in the House on both sides, but it's about the level of accountability and the process that the public can depend upon as part of ensuring that their dollars are being well spent. So there really are two principal methodologies in the bill that will ensure that will happen.

The public accounts for each fiscal year will include information about the use of the revenue from the Ontario health premium. Now, if that revenue stream is identified in the public accounts, there are opportunities for members on all sides, from all parties to question, to challenge the expenditures.

1740

Finally, there's a provision for a standing or select committee of the Assembly to be appointed to review the Ontario health premium. This is being put in place for a period of time that's absolutely necessary and critical, and there's a provision within the act for a firm review of that within a four-year period. So there are provisions for accountability directly within the act that the public can depend on.

I appreciate the few minutes to speak on this and look forward to the balance of the debate on the motion before us.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr Dunlop: I'm quite pleased to rise again for a couple of minutes to speak on Bill 106 and the comments made by the two members opposite.

I think, as we go through this piece of legislation and get more debate on it—I was obviously very pleased the other day with our leadoff on it. I thought Mr Flaherty, who started out with our leadoff speech, did a remarkable job and showed what a great finance minister he actually was. I think anybody on either side of the House who wanted to take notes on a piece of legislation or the performance of a government could read the one-hour leadoff speech that Mr Flaherty gave on that piece of legislation.

I think it's important to note too that this bill, called An Act to implement Budget measures and amend the Crown Forest Sustainability Act, 1994, is a piece of legislation that obviously we on this side of the House will not be supporting whatsoever, particularly the budget bill.

Yesterday, I spoke for a few minutes on the bring-your-own-wine bill that Mr Watson had introduced. Obviously, that's a bill that's controversial, and our members on this side will be debating it in one way or the other. Some will support it and some will oppose it.

But our caucus will be completely opposed to this bill, because basically what we're saying is that we took the government in one direction for eight and a half years. We think we did a really good job of that—had a strong economy, left a really good economy for you folks to inherit, a million new jobs—and now we're slowly watching the deterioration of all the work we had done. We're watching it go downhill, and we think that Ontario's in trouble. Time will tell, and in three years when we're re-elected as the government, I think we'll know that a piece of legislation like this bill today that we're speaking about was a wrong move.

I appreciate this opportunity and look forward to further debate.

Ms Horwath: I thought it was really interesting to hear the comments of the government side on the bill. In particular, there were a couple of things that I noticed that I wanted to touch on.

One was the member from Etobicoke-Lakeshore and her way of characterizing this bill and talking about how it's going to implement a transformation of health care. The biggest transformation I see is the transformation of taking from the poor and giving to the rich in regard to the way that this regressive tax is being implemented. But never mind that.

The other thing that I thought was very interesting is the description of the very sober way that the government had to look at things once they won the election. So they drunkenly promised the sky, and when reality hit after the election, they very soberly had to realize that they were going to have to break most of their election promises that they made during a drunken binge with the public during the election campaign. So they're in the situation now where they're breaking their promises and they're making excuses—

Mr Baird: And the taxpayers get the hangover.

Ms Horwath: And the taxpayers get the hangover. Thank you very much, Mr Baird.

Similarly, some of the comments by the member from Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge were quite interesting, particularly when he spoke about the public accounts committee. Really, what the government wants to suggest is that this is where accountability takes place. But, in fact, this government was not being accountable and was not being transparent in the secret deal that they had with the doctors. It took the pressure from the opposition and the pressure from the media to finally force the government, force the minister, force the Premier to make that document public only, I believe, yesterday afternoon.

So here we go again. On a daily basis, there are opportunities to be accountable to the public. It doesn't take the public accounts committee; it takes commitment from this government to be transparent and accountable every day.

Ms Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West): I want to pick up on a couple of comments made by my colleagues from Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge and Etobicoke-Lakeshore. The first one is the issue of community health centres. It's interesting to me that the member for Hamilton East talked about our plan as taking from the poor. It seems to me that the transformation we're trying to implement has everything to do with dealing with the community, has everything to do with people in the community who cannot access health care at this point.

Community health centres are a perfect example of that. There are two community health centres that deal with people in my riding, in Flemingdon Park and in north Toronto, and they are exactly the kind of interdisciplinary, broad-based institutions that deal with all comers, that deal with people who are very needy and need access close to where they live. That's the kind of investment we're making. The point the member from Etobicoke-Lakeshore made is that we're investing in those models, and that is exactly what we mean by the transformation.

The other point I wanted to pick up on was the issue of the bravery of the decision we made. I think it's absolutely clear that when we were confronted with the reality of the mess that was left to us by the previous government, we had to take responsible action, and that is what we did. We looked at what was in front of us and we took the responsible decision. In fact, we are leading the way. The point that the member from Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge made is that we're leading the way in terms of the premium, and we're leading the way on our investments. The OMA deal, as the Minister of Health said today, is a landmark deal. It is going to change the face of primary care in this province. There hasn't been a government in decades that's been brave enough to change the way we deal with primary care.

Mr Ouellette: Just to continue from where I left off a little bit earlier on—

Interjections.

Mr Ouellette: I see I'm not going to get a chance to speak.

I'm going to continue on the crown forest sustainability aspect in regard to this Bill 106. A number of

things were brought up that the member for Timmins-James Bay was probably wanting to get out, such as the fact that most people don't realize that the companies in Hearst, for example, have planted over 100 million trees in that particular area.

Mr Chudleigh: A hundred million?

Mr Ouellette: Over 100 million. Not only that, but so has the community of Hearst. They've got large numbers.

He also spoke, and it was brought forward, about the impact of the legislation on the cedar mill that was mentioned. One aspect about it is that governments should not decide whether a company can or cannot make money. It should be that company's decision. When they decide to move forward with the cedar mill, if they think they can secure enough of the fibre out there, as it's called, or the wood, then they should be able to move forward. I would like to get more details with regard to the changes that are coming in and what the intent is with that.

Some of the other parts that need to be discussed—he mentioned the value-added products. The difficulty there was that the company he was referring to was actually trying to take a by-product of another company that was sending it to somebody else. They felt they could make two-by-fours and other aspects from wood pieces of two-by-fours that were left over. They call that a value-added product. They had a mill that was going to splice these pieces together, but the difficulty was that those pieces were being allocated, chipped up and utilized in another process.

In other words, government should not be deciding how businesses are going to do business-to-business relations. That's part of the problem. One of the concerns here is that if somebody feels they are chipping up the waste material to be used in a pulp plant, then that's where they should go. It shouldn't be decided because government says that somebody else can make a better profit while utilizing that. The main thing about that whole aspect is to ensure that there are jobs being found in northern Ontario.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member from Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge in reply.

Mr Arthurs: On behalf of myself and my colleague from Etobicoke-Lakeshore, I want to thank the members from Simcoe North, Hamilton East, Don Valley West and Oshawa for their comments on the bill.

I can't help but agree with the member from Simcoe North that the economy has been in good shape over the past few years. The private sector and public sector should be complimented on that. Even over the past year, Minister Cordiano made reference to some 80,000 additional jobs added in the past year. I think we're all anxious to see the economy continue to roll along.

1750

I must say, though, much like the legislation we passed, normally it's referred to—if the legislation is passed, he may want to phrase his consideration of re-election as a government in the same way in three years, rather than assuming something at this point in time.

To the member from Hamilton East, it was sobering when we found a \$5.6-billion hole in the bottom of the well. The money had run out of it. First, we have to plug the hole before one can put anything back into it that one can draw on in the future.

We're working on a four-year transformation plan. It's not a one-year plan; it's part of a broader mandate. We are focused on driving health care into the community. We are focused on family health care at the community level. The local integrated health networks that the minister has announced and is moving forward on will help to achieve that. Not only do we find a need to put money into the system at this point, but the transformation of health care will provide opportunities for improving health care by reducing the dependence on certain elements of our system. Ideally, it will allow us to avoid some of the future investments that might otherwise be necessary and to use those dollars in the best possible way for the best possible health care that one can provide. I look forward to the continuing debate and, ideally, the passage of this bill.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member from Nepean-Carleton.

Mr Baird: It's my—I won't say "pleasure" to speak to this bill, because this is not a good bill. This bill has three parts. I listened with great interest to the former Minister of Natural Resources talk about the Crown Forest Sustainability Act amendments, so I'll skip that and I'll confine my remarks to two sections.

The first is the third section, the Trust Beneficiaries' Liability Act, 2004. I believe it's for extending liability to those folks who invest in an income trust. I want to tell the members that I support this section of the bill. It looks a lot like Bill 35, which was brought in by the member for Nepean-Carleton last year. I'm just pleased that the Chair of Management Board saw my private member's bill and felt so strongly about it that he wanted to include it in a government bill. I want to thank him for that. It's much appreciated.

This section of the bill was in a budget bill previously that the Liberals had voted against, but we're glad that they are back on board, providing extended liability to the investments of the income trust.

Hon David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal): Are you on board?

Mr Baird: I'm on board for this section of the bill. If they want to segregate it off, the opposition will pass it tonight. We offered to pass it in June and we offered to pass it in December, in conversations with the Minister of Finance, who then had responsibility for it. But if they want to take it off and pass Bill 35 tonight, we in the opposition would also shelve this part of the bill so that it could be law before 6 o'clock, if that's what the will of the House was. As usual, the official opposition is trying to be helpful.

Hon Mr Caplan: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: If the member would move unanimous consent to pass Bill 106 tonight, the government would be happy to entertain it.

The Acting Speaker: If you would take your discussions outside, we'll continue with the debate.

Mr Baird: I was talking about the third section of three-part bill. If you wanted to segregate that off, we'd pass it tonight. If you want to do that, we'll stay late.

I would like to ask for unanimous consent to pass Bill 35 on second and third reading, Mr Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? Hearing none, continue.

Mr Baird: There you go: another broken promise. Another broken promise from the member for Don Valley East.

OK, so I've said enough nice, supportive things about the McGuinty government. I do regularly stand up and acknowledge when they get things right, and I think that's important. And section 3 of this bill is right. I don't necessarily attribute that to the man whose name is on the front, Mr Sorbara; I attribute that to the great wise helmsman of the Liberal cabinet, Gerry Phillips. He has done his job in encouraging the minister prior to the budget to put this in the budget and the accompanying budget bills, so I'll acknowledge his good work in this regard. I wish we had passed it in December or June, but later is best.

I am going to speak against section 2 of this bill. Let me read the explanatory note that they put on the inside cover of the bill, the idiot's guide to the bill. It tells you exactly what's in it in plain English language. Let me read what it says. "The Income Tax Act is amended to impose"—their words, not mine—"a tax"—a tax; they want to impose a tax—"called the Ontario health premium." If that doesn't put an end to the debate about whether this is a premium or a tax, I don't know what does. Right in their own language they use the word "impose." I checked under this. Where is the referendum they promised they would have before the tax increase kicked in? No referendum is planned.

They're going to impose a tax. It's going to go to support health care, we're told. With this new tax, in my riding the average household will pay between \$600 and \$900 per household, on average, to support this. For the single mom on welfare—sorry, the single mom off welfare, got into work, who's making \$35,000 a year, it's a 24% tax increase.

What's she going to get for that? She's going to get fired nurses at the Queensway-Carleton Hospital. The Queensway-Carleton Hospital is getting a 0.6% budget increase. Tomorrow—the cat will be out of the bag—the good folks at the Queensway-Carleton will have to submit their plan to deal with the small increase they got and they're going to have to do two things: They're going to have to lay off nurses and they're going to have to increase patient waiting times for procedures, and that's too bad. It is unfortunate because the team at the Queensway-Carleton do an amazing job. The president, Tom Schonberg, and the board chair, Jeff Polowin, have done a phenomenal job. The nurses, the administrators, the volunteer board, the workers there and the volunteer foundation do a good job.

The Ottawa Hospital, which we spoke about earlier today, is getting a 1.8% budget increase. When we know that this government's deal with the doctors is giving, on average, a 24% increase, all they could do for the Ottawa Hospital is 1.8%.

We had a bill that we debated this morning on this issue. You would think the Ottawa members would be fighting to speak up and stand up for their constituents. North Bay isn't in Ottawa. None of the members for Ottawa would speak to this bill. The member for North Bay spoke, the member from Markham spoke, the member for Thornhill spoke, but where were the members from Ottawa? They were not on their feet. They were not speaking and defending our local hospital. But if Dalton McGuinty won't defend our local hospital, I will.

To those folks over at the Ministry of Health, Jason Grier, Ken Chan and company, all we're asking for is to get the same deal the doctors got. The nurses at the Ottawa Hospital just want the same deal you gave the average physician. But, alas, that is not to be. I was very disappointed that not one member from Ottawa would have the guts to get up and speak and vote in favour of the motion.

I presented an Electricity Act and all the Liberals voted for it, including the member opposite.

Interjection.

Mr Baird: I appreciated the honourable member from Dundas voting for my bill on electricity.

The Acting Speaker: Pursuant to standing order 37, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

CLASS SIZE

The Acting Speaker (Mr Joseph N. Tascona): The member for Oak Ridges has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given on October 13 by the Minister of Education. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the minister or parliamentary assistant may reply for up to five minutes.

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I regret keeping you beyond the normal appointed time, but I had no option with my question to the Minister of Education, which I consider to be extremely important because it goes to the heart of the credibility not only of the Minister of Education, but really to the heart of the credibility of this government in terms of their ability to manage the affairs of government. It relates to a policy that really is a cornerstone—as it has been referred to by the Premier as well as the minister—of this government, and that is to put a hard cap on class sizes from junior kindergarten to grade 3.

1800

My question to the minister during question period was very straightforward. It related to a discrepancy of

some \$600 million between what the Liberal Party indicated this policy would cost in its full implementation and what a document prepared by ministry staff projected the cost to be. Some \$375 million is what the minister has indicated it would cost. We have a document that was prepared by ministry staff in preparation for the incoming new government, and that document puts the cost of implementation of this policy at in excess of \$1 billion.

The purpose of this House is to ensure that in matters of public policy, we collectively, as a Legislature, understand what the implication of policy really is going to be, particularly given the tentative financial circumstances that the Minister of Finance refers to constantly.

I asked the minister in a very straightforward way, "Will you today stand in your place and tell us whether the real cost is \$375 million, as you say, or whether it is \$1 billion-plus? Who do we believe in this place?"

I didn't get an answer. I look at Hansard, and again, in response to the initial question, which was very straightforward, as I say, the Minister of Education waxed eloquent around many other issues. The best that he could do was to say, "... over four years, and at the price tag we talked about," which you'll admit certainly doesn't answer my question.

I again attempted in supplementary to get the minister to come on record. Again he did not give me a straight answer as to why the discrepancy between the ministry document that is prepared without political interference—these are bureaucrats, civil servants, who have a responsibility to serve this place and to serve government, who have placed the cost at \$1 billion-plus. The minister continues to refer to \$375 million.

So we're here tonight. I'm not sure where the Minister of Education is. I was hoping he would stand in his place tonight and give me that explanation: why this discrepancy between the work that ministry officials have prepared objectively, without interference or spin by the minister or by the politicians in this place, an objective assessment of what this policy would cost—over \$1 billion.

We continue to have the political rhetoric. I suppose the parliamentary assistant is going to stand in place for the minister and attempt to make an explanation. I challenge members of the House and those who are observing to listen very carefully as to whether or not they will in fact have an explanation as to this discrepancy of \$600 million. I say to you, if there is such a discrepancy in this one policy issue, what does that say to the many other areas of this government and their ability to manage? I suggest to you that it goes to the heart of their credibility and their trustworthiness.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education from Don Valley West.

Ms Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West): Right off the top, I want to just establish that there is not a credible, sanctioned document that talks about the number that Mr Klees, the member for Oak Ridges, has mentioned. So what I'm going to talk about is what our

policy is on class size, what we have already done, and ask why the member for Oak Ridges would be opposed to lowering class size in the early years.

The first thing I want to say is that for this school year alone, we are investing \$90 million for reduction in primary class sizes, and of that \$90 million, in York region there is \$6.7 million being invested to lower class sizes in the schools in the riding that Mr Klees represents. I guess the question is, has Mr Klees gone to those schools and asked the teachers who are benefiting from that investment whether they are upset about that, whether they are worried about the fact that there are more teachers in their schools and that the class sizes in kindergarten to grade 3 have gone down? My guess is that they are not worried about that.

My experience as a parent, as an activist and as a school trustee suggests to me that the teachers in this province, across the province, are very pleased that repair work is beginning, and certainly in my own riding, that's the case. There are schools in my own riding where I know there have been additional teachers, and that has lowered the class sizes. There are 1,300 schools in this province where additional teachers have been hired, so that is thousands of children who are already benefiting from this policy.

I think the issue of credibility is one we have to really think about in relation to the previous government's record on education. We have watched over the last 10 years as resources were stripped out of our schools and maintenance was not done. Human resources were taken out of every sector, whether it was caretaking, whether it was teachers, whether it was guidance counsellors—all of those people. We've lost vice-principals. In this province, we have lost thousands of education workers. What we are trying to do in this government is to rebuild that sector.

Class size: The class size cap, which we will implement over the four years of our mandate, is part of a whole strategy. The implementation of our strategy is not just about a class size cap. I understand that the previous government had a lot of trouble with that kind of complex idea. They want simplistic thinking, and that's not what we're in the business of delivering. We want to demonstrate that we understand how complex the education system is.

As well as smaller class sizes, which we know allow for higher student achievement, which we know allow for teachers to do other things in the classroom—they allow for other possibilities. Smaller class sizes have lasting effects. If you invest in the early years, there are fewer interventions as you go along. I know the member for Guelph-Wellington has served on expulsion and suspension hearings. As a trustee, many times you hear stories about kids who needed help early on. Had that help been there early on, those kids wouldn't have been suspended, they wouldn't have been expelled and they wouldn't be out of the system.

What we're trying to do is invest in special ed, invest in smaller class sizes, invest in those resources that are going to keep our kids in school, invest in the arts so that our kids have a well-rounded education. That's our strategy. It's a complex strategy. It's not a simple strategy, so I'm not surprised the member from Oak Ridges doesn't understand it.

The other thing I think we have to remember is that this is—

Mr Klees: On a point of order, Mr Speaker—

The Acting Speaker: There are no points of order during the late show. Continue, member.

Mr Klees: I just want to say—

The Acting Speaker: There are no points of order. Continue.

Ms Wynne: This is a member who believes in two-tiered medicine. He said that in his leadership campaign. My suspicion is that he believes in two-tiered public education. Really what this is about is that he thinks we should be taking money out of the public education system, putting it into the private education system and letting our public schools die on the vine.

That is not what we're about. We're not going to do that. We got elected to repair the damage that's been done. Class size cap is part of that. We're moving on it, we will implement it, but it's part of a whole strategy.

The Acting Speaker: There being no further matter to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried.

This House stands adjourned until 1:30 pm next Monday afternoon.

The House adjourned at 1810.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

Class size

Mr Klees.....	3425
Ms Wynne.....	3426

OTHER BUSINESS

Chris Saunders

The Speaker.....	3391
------------------	------

Notice of dissatisfaction

The Speaker.....	3404
------------------	------

Business of the House

Mr Duncan	3404
-----------------	------

TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Jeudi 14 octobre 2004

PREMIÈRE LECTURE

Loi de 2004 modifiant la Loi sur sur la protection et la promotion de la santé, projet de loi 124,

M. Smitherman

Adoptée.....	3387
--------------	------

Loi de 2004 modifiant la Loi sur la protection de l'environnement, projet de loi 125, *M. O'Toole*

Adoptée.....	3387
--------------	------

Loi de 2004 modifiant la Loi sur la santé et la sécurité au travail (harcèlement), projet de loi 126,

M^{me} Churley

Adoptée.....	3387
--------------	------

DEUXIÈME LECTURE

Loi de 2004 sur les mesures budgétaires (n° 2), projet de loi 106, *M. Sorbara*

M. Bisson	3405
-----------------	------

Débat présumé ajourné.....	3425
----------------------------	------

CONTENTS

Thursday 14 October 2004

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Palliative care

Mrs Cansfield	3367, 3375
Mr Miller	3368
Ms Martel	3369
Mr Qaadri	3371
Mr Tascona	3372
Mr Wilkinson	3373
Ms Broten	3373
Mr Craiton	3373
Mr Jackson	3374
Agreed to	3384

Ottawa Hospital

Mr Baird	3375, 3383
Mr Brownell	3377
Mr Sterling	3377
Ms Martel	3378
Mr Wong	3380
Mr Yakabuski	3380
Mr Racco	3381
Mr Arnott	3382
Ms Smith	3383
Negatived	3384

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Cancer treatment

Mr Wilson	3384
-----------------	------

Assistance to farmers

Mr Parsons	3384
------------------	------

Woodstock General Hospital

Mr Hardeman	3385
-------------------	------

Ramadan

Ms Churley	3385
------------------	------

Toronto Transit Commission

Mr Berardinetti	3385
-----------------------	------

Children's immunization program

Mr Miller	3386
-----------------	------

World Sight Day

Ms Wynne	3386
----------------	------

Class size

Mr Fonseca	3386
------------------	------

Hydro generation

Mr Colle	3386
----------------	------

FIRST READINGS

Health Protection and Promotion

Amendment Act, 2004, Bill 124,

Mr Smitherman

Agreed to	3387
-----------------	------

Environmental Protection

Amendment Act, 2004, Bill 125,

Mr O'Toole

Agreed to	3387
-----------------	------

Mr O'Toole	3387
------------------	------

Occupational Health and Safety

Amendment Act (Harassment),

2004, Bill 126, *Ms Churley*

Agreed to	3387
-----------------	------

Ms Churley	3387
------------------	------

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

Chief medical officer of health

Mr Smitherman	3387
---------------------	------

Mr Baird	3390
----------------	------

Ms Martel	3390
-----------------	------

OMA agreement

Mr Smitherman	3388
---------------------	------

Mr Baird	3390
----------------	------

Mr Hampton	3391
------------------	------

ORAL QUESTIONS

Hospital funding

Mr Runciman	3391
-------------------	------

Mr McGuinty	3392
-------------------	------

OMA agreement

Mr Baird	3392
----------------	------

Mr Smitherman	3392
---------------------	------

Mr Hampton	3393, 3394
------------------	------------

Mr McGuinty	3394, 3395
-------------------	------------

York Central Hospital

Mr Klees	3396
----------------	------

Mr Smitherman	3396
---------------------	------

Hepatitis C

Mr Hampton	3396
------------------	------

Mr Smitherman	3397
---------------------	------

Video games

Ms Broten	3397
-----------------	------

Mr Watson	3397
-----------------	------

Ontario drug benefit program

Mr Jackson	3398
------------------	------

Mr McGuinty	3398
-------------------	------

Labour dispute

Mr Kormos	3398
-----------------	------

Mrs Bountrogianni	3398
-------------------------	------

Hydro generation

Mr Qaadri	3399
-----------------	------

Mr Sorbara	3399
------------------	------

Cancer treatment

Mr Hudak	3399
----------------	------

Mr Smitherman	3399
---------------------	------

Steel industry

Ms Horwath	3400
------------------	------

Mr McGuinty	3400
-------------------	------

PETITIONS

Chiropractic services

Mr Tascona	3400
------------------	------

Mrs Van Bommel	3402
----------------------	------

Mr O'Toole	3402
------------------	------

Optometrists

Mr Hampton	3401
------------------	------

Ms Martel	3402
-----------------	------

Eye examinations

Mr Craiton	3401
------------------	------

Volunteer firefighters

Mr Wilson	3401
-----------------	------

Property taxation

Ms Horwath	3402
------------------	------

GO transit service

Mr Delaney	3402
------------------	------

Leslie M. Frost Centre

Mr Miller	3403
-----------------	------

Health care services

Ms Martel	3403
-----------------	------

Ms Churley	3403
------------------	------

Health care funding

Mr Hudak	3403
----------------	------

SECOND READINGS

Budget Measures Act, 2004 (No. 2),

Bill 106, Mr Sorbara

Mr Bisson	3404, 3408, 3419
-----------------	------------------

Mr McMeekin	3407
-------------------	------

Mr O'Toole	3407, 3412, 3415
------------------	------------------

Ms Horwath	3408, 3410, 3414, 3416, 3420, 3422
------------------	------------------------------------

Mrs Van Bommel	3408
----------------------	------

Mr Duguid	3409, 3411
-----------------	------------

Mr Delaney	3409
------------------	------

Mr Chudleigh	3410
--------------------	------

Mrs Sandals	3411
-------------------	------

Mr Ouellette	3411, 3423
--------------------	------------

Mr Colle	3415
----------------	------

Mrs Witmer	3415
------------------	------

Mr Arthurs	3415, 3421, 3423
------------------	------------------

Mr Berardinetti	3419
-----------------------	------

Mr Dunlop	3419, 3422
-----------------	------------

Mr Sergio	3420
-----------------	------

Ms Broten	3420
-----------------	------

Ms Wynne	3423
----------------	------

Mr Baird	3424
----------------	------

Debate deemed adjourned	3425
-------------------------------	------

Continued overleaf

